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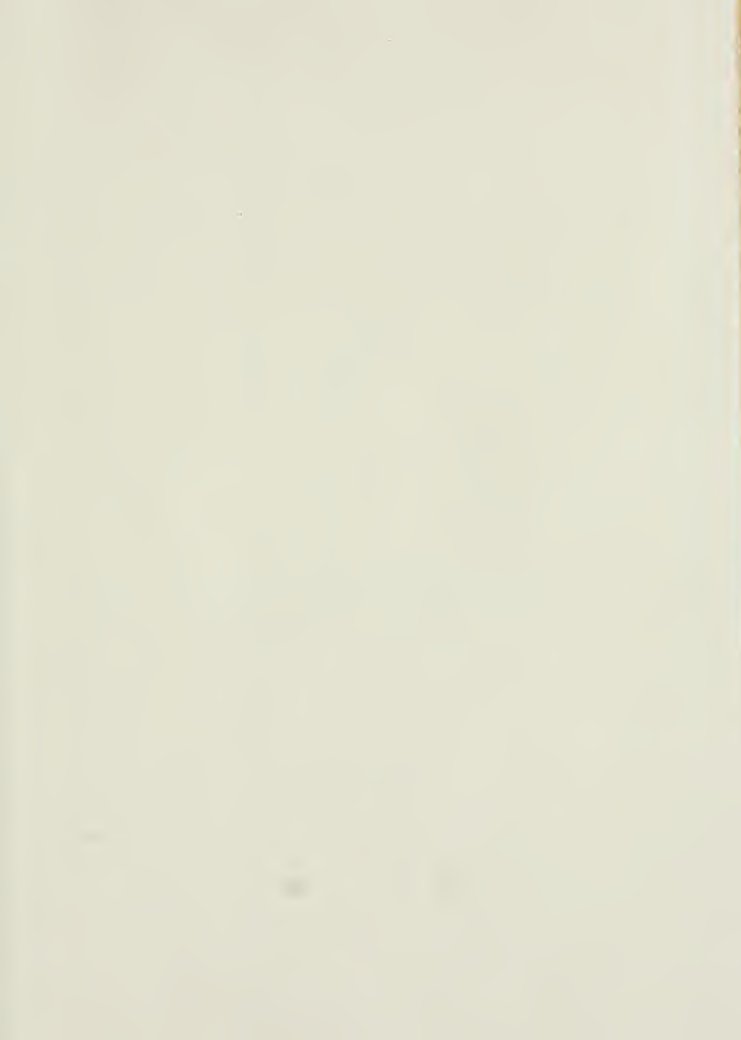
PRINCETON • NEW JERSEY



PRESENTED BY

Mrs. Alexander Proudfit

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Vulliemin, L. 1797-1879.
Some account of the life of
the Rev. F.A.A. Gonthier



L I F E

OF THE

REV. F. A. A. GONTHIER.



Rev^d John Proudfit, for his

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE

University OF THE *Library.*

REV. F. A. A. GONTHIER,

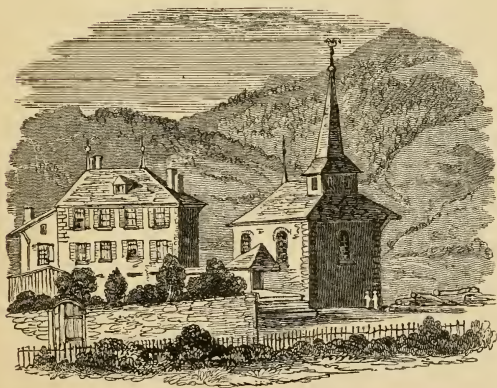
Minister of the Gospel at Nîmes and in Switzerland.

FROM THE FRENCH OF HIS NEPHEWS,

L. AND C. VULLIEMIN.

from *by Adine L. Tayler.*

WITH A PREFACE BY REV. C. B. TAYLER, M.A.



Church and Parsonage of St. Cergues.

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY;

DEPOSITORY, 56, PATERNOSTER-ROW; SOLD BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

1837.

WILLIAM TYLER,
PRINTER,
BOLT-COURT, FLEET-STREET.

P R E F A C E.

OUR first thought on laying down the life of M. Gonthier, might be—Ah! here, indeed, is an instance of the melancholy fact, that “man is born to sorrow as the sparks fly upward:” but we must go into the sanctuary of God, and lift up our hands towards his holy oracle, if we would understand the life of man on earth, and the dealings of the Creator with him. Then every thing wears at once a new aspect. That which seemed a bounded life, with no horizon beyond the mound of the grave, becomes at once the pilgrimage of an immortal being whose rest is not here, but who is going onward to the Land of Promise. He to whom we looked in our unscriptural ignorance, only as God the Creator, appears to us in his revealed character as a covenant God, loving our fallen, guilty

world ; a Father full of pity, giving his Son to suffer for us as our Redeemer, and to plead for us as our Mediator, and sending his Holy Spirit to make every returning sinner not only a subject of the new birth, but a child of adoption and grace. Then, though born to trouble, the trouble itself is made, by chastening love, that tribulation which worketh patience, and by which the child of suffering is made perfect, as he follows the Captain of his salvation to glory.

The reader of the life of this christian pastor, whose domestic afflictions were so peculiarly trying, may learn, therefore, that every trouble was only a means to an end, and that end the most glorious attainable. Amid the gloom, if his eye have a spiritual discernment, he may distinguish, even from the commencement of his chastening, the first faint gleam of that shining light, which “shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

To love (as we are told by those who knew him) seemed necessary to the very existence of M. Gonthier ; but the love of the natural heart

will entwine itself round any—every earthly object, in preference to Him who has the highest claim to our love; indeed, so high a claim, that the affection which we feel to our dearest human connexions ought to be cold as hate, when put in competition with the love we owe to Him. One after another did such cherished earthly objects seek to occupy, almost as a shrine of idolatry, the heart of this child of God: but one after another, the wife, the child, the other beloved friends were successively removed: he was not permitted by his gracious Father, to set his affections on any thing below. The purposes of God were at length accomplished, and He who is “altogether lovely,” became “all and in all” to this favoured disciple. His path was, indeed, that of tribulation; but “all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant.”

M. Gonthier was a minister of the Most High God, and he was highly honoured when thus taught by God himself, that the sphere of a minister is not merely within the pleasant circle of domestic life; that he has, in fact, an embassy committed to him of far greater importance

than that which passes from the sovereign of the highest earthly empire ; that no responsibility is so tremendous as that of the pastor of Christ's flock. He must either "feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with his own blood," or appear before the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, defiled with the blood of those who have perished through his neglect.

But do we condemn the love of such a heart as that of M. Gonthier? We are far from doing so : we are well assured, that the Grace which at length made Christ Jesus the supreme object of his love, enlarged the very capacity of loving in his heart ; ennobled, purified, and gave its own enduring character to the affection which he bore for every human being : and thus he learned to sorrow not as one who has no hope ; and thus he learned to look forward to his union in glory with those who were taken before him, when God himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. How touchingly is it recorded, that he lifted every morning the covering from the embroidered screen which had been the work of his wife's hands, and then turned to those pas-

sages in the word of God, which assure the members of Christ that they shall meet around the throne of God and of the Lamb.

The most careless reader might come to this conclusion, after following this man of many sorrows through the course of his weary pilgrimage, How much better it is to suffer than to sin ! How much better to suffer affliction, as a child of God, than to be celebrated among the wise, or the mighty, or the noble of this vain world ! We all know, from common observation, how many a gifted favourite of the world has closed his splendid career in darkness and in crime. It is, therefore, a profitable study to consider the unnoticed course of such a person as this lowly minister of the gospel, and to observe how the chastisements of his heavenly Father have yielded the peaceable fruits of righteousness ; how death has been disarmed of its sting, and he hath been made more than a conqueror, through Him that loved him, over all the enemies of his salvation. No, do not let the careless reader throw aside the volume, because it contains the record of so much suffering. The

excuse would be a just one, if the book in question were a mere tale of fiction, that we have sorrows enough in real life without reading about them. There is no fiction here. These are the actual sufferings in the real life of a fellow-creature. Let the thoughtless man, who repines in the midst of health and worldly comforts, think of the trials of this suffering saint, and humble himself before God for his own churlish ingratitude. Let the minister of the gospel, with strong health and unimpaired faculties, who may be disposed to look upon the nervous maladies of this christian pastor with that pity which is akin to contempt, let him blush to recall how much more was accomplished in weakness and infirmity, than he himself, perhaps, has even attempted. And let all consider, that it was not the religion of this child of affliction that caused his suffering; it was his only solace, and, to God's glory be it recorded, he found it to be all-sufficient.

One thing is inexpressibly beautiful in the account before us, the love of this follower of Christ Jesus for his Master's name; even for

the single expressive Name of JESUS! When his nephew said to him, "Deprived as we are of the interchange of words, there is one name which in itself expresses every thing we could desire to say to each other,"—"Ah! yes," he exclaimed, with sudden and unexpected energy, "when all else fades away, when we can no longer connect one idea with another, or scarcely dwell on any subject, the name of Jesus still remains to us; every thing may fail and vanish away, one object endures in imperishable brightness. It is ever more and more to be desired, it is altogether lovely. This, my beloved children, is the cross of Jesus Christ!" The same spirit seemed to breathe in his touching reply to the roman catholic missionary, when we read that, as they parted, the latter could not help assuming an air of authority, and exhorted his companion to avoid the perdition that awaited him, by placing himself under the shelter of the romish church. "I think," relates the brother of the popish priest, who is himself the narrator of the circumstance, "I think I still see the protestant pastor, and hear the penetrating tone of his voice,

as he said, 'Ah, sir; if you did but know the happiness of belonging entirely to Jesus Christ.'” Throughout his illness, to the very last, this simple faith, this single name, preserved the power it possessed over him. The only word that trembled on his dying lips, but spoken always in a tone of perfect hope, was the one name of JESUS; that which was the chief desire of his soul, hung on the last accents of his expiring breath; it was his watchword to those around him, it was peace and assurance to himself.

There can be no doubt that M. Gonthier was brought to that state of nervous disease, which at one time threatened to impair for ever even the faculties of his mind, by his extraordinary exertions; and we leave to the reader to condemn or to excuse those exertions as he pleases. We do not say that he was not mistaken; but it is his history, not his praises that have been set before the reader. It is indeed a lamentable mistake that an author makes, when he attempts to justify every part of the character and conduct of the man whose life he records. Such eulogies would probably be more painful to the subject of

them, than to any other individual. There may be parts in the history of this excellent man which we should forbear to offer as a model for imitation to a youthful minister of the gospel; but two things must never be forgotten—that his energies and exertions did not merely blaze forth and burn out, but from first to last he was a burning and a shining light; his course was consistent to the very end: and, secondly, That he had but one object before him, the glory of God, even of God manifest in the flesh, and crucified for sinners. We must love, therefore, we must admire, even what we might not exactly imitate.

Whatever he might have seemed during some seasons of his protracted course of trials, it is on his dying bed that every morbid symptom disappears; and that this meek and suffering disciple of our Lord encounters the king of terrors, in the fulness of that superhuman strength which was literally made perfect in his lowest extremity of weakness. It is here that the dying, fainting child of mortality becomes more than a conqueror, simply through Him that loved him;

and rides on valiantly; so that we are almost led to exclaim, with the prophet of old time, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.” Weakness and sinfulness, death and the agony of suffering, seem swallowed up in victory; or become like the fearful shapes and shadows of darkness, as they fade away, when the sun comes forth in his splendour, and earth and heaven rejoice in returning light.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE ORIGINAL WORK.

THIS account was not written for the public. The incidents it contains do not extend beyond the narrow circle of domestic life. Addressed as it is to the friends of M. Gonthier, it enters into many details which could interest few others. To those who did not know him, much that is here said may appear superfluous, and many things exaggerated. But his friends will know at once that we have not departed from the language of simple truth; and as to the details, they themselves asked us for them. We wish we had to send them something better than this account, rapidly sketched in the midst of numerous, and, for the most part, painful occupations. Will they forgive us, for having so imperfectly fulfilled the task they have allotted us?

L I F E

OF THE

REV. F. A. A. GONTHIER.

TO THE FRIENDS OF MONSIEUR GONTHIER.

You ask us, as with one voice, to speak to you of our friend. You claim a share in our inheritance of sad, sweet recollections. You were well acquainted with his life of continued trial, and would fain know something of the inner man; you would have us speak to you of the Spirit of power in a heart so tender, yet so severely tried; so weak, yet at the same time so enduring.

We will attempt to obey your wishes. Yet we entreat you not to expect from us more than we are able to perform. We cannot describe our friend as he really was. Had he distinguished himself in science, in letters, or in the strife of the interests of the day, the things we should

have to tell, would be found already written before the eyes of men, in characters easily read. It is, however, of his inward life that you wish us to speak. You desire to read the secret depths of his pious and affectionate heart. But where is the heart to which another heart is really known? Does not the spirit of man continually elude the comprehension of his fellow-man? Its life is motion, nay, progressive motion, advancing ever towards infinitude. It may, indeed, be said of those to whom the Lord himself has pointed out the high mark which they press forward to reach, that their horizon is far more extended than that of other men. Their view of human things is always more elevated. The air they breathe is too pure, their sense of feeling is too exquisite, the colours of their sky are too delicately tinted for us to be able to depict them. Do we at times suppose that we have reached their standard? We find that they have already far surpassed us in strong faith, in purity of conscience, in holy love. It is one of their trials on earth, that they should not be fully understood. It is one of ours to remain so far behind them. We may go still farther. Could we be enabled to understand them better, it would still be as difficult to be faithful interpreters to them. How is it possible to de-

scribe the tone, the manner, which are the index of the soul within, without which the faithfully rendered words can give but a faint and faithless representation? The very expression of countenance,—who shall convey an idea of its evanescent character, though it portrays so vividly the deep and glowing feelings of the heart? And yet we owe to you, as a debt, that which we have received from him. Circumstances of which we were the sole witnesses, words which we alone have heard, and which have taught our hearts many an affecting lesson—the record of these things is due to you; for you revered our father, and your affection was delightful to him, during the weary season of his protracted sufferings. It is right also to preserve to the church some memorial of a life devoted to its sacred service, and which may still in some manner serve it. This obligation, which has, indeed, about it more of comfort than of sadness, we will endeavour to fulfil. We will try to retrace some features of that character which is ever present to our thoughts; and to recall him who was sent by our blessed Lord to be our guide through this our earthly career.

There are some dispositions singularly gentle, and tender, and extremely impressible; alike fitted for exquisite enjoyment, and for keen

sufferings, of a sensibility soon excited and affected, and perhaps as soon exhausted. You know that notwithstanding he possessed such a delicate and lively temperament, his countenance was at once calm and penetrating; his judgment was remarkable for its equity. He had a quick and clear perception, and an astonishing discernment of character. But his distinguishing feature was the overflowing affection of his heart. It could be said of him, that it was necessary to his existence that he should have something to love. He was naturally formed for strong attachment, for filial love, for devoted friendship, for conjugal and paternal affection, for promoting the happiness of his fellow-creatures. He seemed to look for all his happiness in these enjoyments. He sought, in fact, for heaven upon earth. You know how he gave himself up entirely to his friends, to his family, to the service of the church. Almost all these links were broken. He saw all those he most loved laid in the grave before him; and at length, worn out by sorrow, and by incessant labour which had far surpassed his strength, he found himself incapable of continuing his ministerial duties. The most affectionate of human beings, he was forced from extreme weakness to give up the society of every one. We have seen him dying by degrees, alone, a

prey to acute sufferings, and deprived of almost every thing which is generally looked upon as enjoyment. But it was then that we were the witnesses of a glorious spectacle. We saw the development of his faith, we saw its increase, as it became more powerful, more pure. All that he had looked for in this world, all that he had expected from earth, he found in Christ with assured hope, and founded on better promises. He then understood that the design of his God through the whole of his life, and the use of so many trials, had been the salvation of his soul, the purifying of his faith, and that he himself might be fitted for a happiness far above what he could ever have enjoyed, or even desired in this world.

Perhaps your friend (though he seldom spoke of himself) may sometimes have transported you by his descriptions to his own paternal dwelling. Among the favours which he had received from Divine goodness, he placed in the foremost rank that of having been born of parents so worthy of their children's veneration and devoted affection. Our grandfather, though not a minister, was a catechist in the little town where he lived, where, also, he kept a school. Our grandmother—a few words of her son's will best describe her. I was saying one day to my uncle, that he had

inherited his mother's mouth. "I wish it may be so," he answered with animation, giving his own application to my words, "for she never failed to defend the absent; nor did I ever hear a word of slander from her lips." Every thing about the house reminded one of old-fashioned manners, and of real godliness. One day resembled the other, but every day was well spent, and I do not think that either my grandfather or grandmother ever wished that a different lot had been theirs. What the one desired, was sure to be the wish of the other. Their festival days were those on which they received God's blessings; and they felt that they received them every day. They noted down, however, most accurately, any occasions on which God's mercies had been more peculiarly vouchsafed to them. My grandfather wrote them down in a book, which was found in his bureau after his death; and the anniversaries of such mercies were always celebrated by them. Among them were written down the birth of their son, on the 21st of December, 1773; and that of their daughter, on the 13th of May, 1775. To these, another day was added, that of the last Sunday of the month of September, 1777; and the reason for so doing was thus noticed in the journal:—

"This year, 1777, has been a period of agi-

tation and uneasiness. The small-pox has been making dreadful havoc in the neighbouring towns, and in all the surrounding country. Numbers of parents, even of those who had large families, have seen all their children taken from them. Some have lost their sight. With others, the disease has fixed itself in various parts of the body, and left behind it such fatal effects as will most probably last for life. Those whose children had as yet been spared, looked upon them, with reason, as being between life and death; and such as, after the attack, saw their children recover, felt as if they received them again from the dead. My wife and I having but two children both of whom we dearly love, and never expecting to have another child, we could not but feel a like anxiety.

“When, on the 9th of August, the disease entered into our house, first by attacking our son, and a few days afterwards, our daughter, we no longer dared to hope that these dear children would be preserved to us. Yet, in thy great and undeserved mercy, O my God, Thou hast spared them, and restored them to us. Blessed be Thy name for ever! Our son was fearfully ill, and had the disorder very full. He was four days without being able to open his eyes, lying almost without strength or life. Those who

came to see him, tried to comfort us concerning his death, which they, as well as we, thought near at hand.

“We ought often to call to remembrance the mercy of God to us; and it is that I may endeavour to appreciate it more thoroughly, that I have resolved to set apart for this purpose the last Sunday in the month of September in every year, that being about the time when my children were quite restored to health.

“On this day I propose,

“1. To read over this account, and strive to realize to myself what might have happened to my beloved children. I will think of my son as given to me again from the dead, and I will return thanks to God for so great a benefit.

“2. God having preserved my children to me, I will reflect on the indispensable obligations I am under of devoting them to his service. I will strive to study their dispositions, their minds, and what improvement they are making in wisdom and knowledge. It would have been better that God should have taken them out of the world in their infancy, than that, through my neglect, they should grow up in ignorance and sin. If God has given them to me, and preserved them to me, ought I not, in return, to offer them up to him, and devote them to his service?

When they are of a proper age, I propose to speak to them of the things written in this book, and of other things proper to lead them to dedicate themselves to their heavenly Father.

“3. On this day I will give alms to the poor. When I am more at leisure, I will also make a point of visiting on this day, or as soon after as possible, my sick neighbours; and consider the best means of being useful to young persons, in remembrance of God’s having preserved my own children to me.

“I do not bind myself by any vow to perform what I have here written down, for fear of breaking it in one way or another. But this is the resolution that I make: I propose to myself to fulfil the duties which gratitude has imposed upon me, not merely on the day marked for that purpose, but I would profit by this day to bring before me, in a more particular manner, the wonderful goodness of God.

“May God in his mercy fill me with gratitude and love towards him for the blessings without number which he has showered down upon myself and my family; and may he grant that this household may be devoted to his service! May he renew his blessings from generation to generation upon our descendants; and may we all be united with Him in heaven above!”

In this manner did our forefather express his pious thoughts; and it was in this moral atmosphere that our uncle lived from his birth. The religious sentiments of his father and mother were the same: yet he soon perceived that the character of their faith differed in some respects, and that they did not express themselves in the same manner. His father, who was of an ardent temperament, looked upon religion as a solemn call to virtue. His more gentle mother received it simply as the election of the grace of God. His father was most forcibly struck by the perfection of the moral law, by its grandeur, and the holiness which it exacts. His mother loved to dwell on the promises of God's love, and they were as food to her soul. This difference might almost be read on the countenance of each of them. The one expressed thanksgiving; and the other zeal and adoration. Their faith in reality was the same; and every difference disappeared when they prayed together. Their son thought that Heaven had united them, that their opposite dispositions might be a mutual help one to the other, and that the one might temper the other. "I was struck," he said to us one day, "to find this apparent disagreement between two beings so perfectly united; I was witness to the blamelessness of their two lives,

and it would have been difficult for me to say which surpassed the other in purity. I learned, amongst other things, not to receive, in religion, the conventional language of any system or form, as absolute; and thus, from the contemplation of these two united but differing characters, I became enlightened on a point as to which we are too often in error, and was enabled to judge clearly and rightly in many difficult positions in my after life."

This sober discretion was in him united to a disposition naturally full of ardour. It is rarely that we do not bring down our religion to the low standard of our own views; or endeavour to force it into a conformity to the narrowness of our own minds: and thus the beams of divine light are often decomposed or broken amidst the darkness of the natural heart. Hence, alas, it follows, that there are as many different views, and as many parties, as there are leanings and varying inclinations in the world. M. Gonthier had early directed his attention to this danger, and had carefully kept up a watch against it in the inmost recesses of his heart. His efforts were crowned with such success, that a single-minded impartiality was the distinguishing feature in his religion. You are not ignorant how equally the christian virtues were reflected in him, without any one

of them throwing the other into the shade. Their influence equally pervaded his mind, his heart, and the whole tenour of his life. Every thing was subjected to this three-fold trial. Whatever he said, no one could doubt that he had thought it, had felt it, and had lived it. From this proceeded his powers of persuasion, and the wide sphere of action which he was enabled to occupy. Others have brought to the church the tribute of higher powers; they may have set forth, with greater lustre, certain portions of moral truth, or they may have arrested attention by more splendid labours; but I know not that there are many, whose influence was more generally or more beneficently exercised. It was impossible not to recognise in him that wisdom which understands, which weighs, which conciliates, which reconciles extremes, which abounds in good works, and which approves itself to the consciences of men by a divine power. It was not easy to resist the words of one, whose life was in such perfect harmony with them, or a voice so wise and at the same time so gentle. The most cultivated as well as the most simple-minded, listened to him with equal delight. Few could hear him without feeling themselves touched on some point or other. Fewer still there were, who did not do

homage, however involuntarily, to a religion so intelligent, so full of life, so pure, and which they saw could sanctify the soul without deadening its powers, ennoble the faculties without absorbing any of them, elevate to the highest things without leaving the lesser duties unfulfilled; and shed over the whole economy of the moral man a spirit of improvement, of love, and of peace. The education and the examples set before him in his paternal home were preparing his heart for the reception of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, even as the field is made ready for the good seed.

At the age of fourteen, he left the shelter of his father's roof, to pursue his studies at the college of Lausanne. He himself may as well describe the impressions he received at this period of his life. One day when we were seated with him on a bench in his garden, we asked him several questions concerning his studies and residence at Lausanne. He answered us nearly as follows:—

“At Lausanne, I had to breathe a different atmosphere from that of my father's house. It was at the time when the philosophy of the last century was so generally prevalent. With its plans and principles for the improvement of social order was associated the most shameless

immorality. I had scarcely arrived there, when, notwithstanding my youth, for I was still a mere boy, a student in theology, who professed a sincere regard for me, put into my hands one of the most licentious novels which the corruption of that age had produced, in order, as he said, to keep me from being dull on my first arrival. My heart felt heavy within me as I read this book: the tears gushed from my eyes; I thought of the chaste purity of the home I had left, and feeling myself all at once deprived of the support I had hitherto experienced from the enlightened affection of my father, I sought earnestly for one who could understand me, and in whom I might safely confide. Such a friend I found, and I began to believe that I possessed all that I could expect from earthly friendship. Our studies were the same; our opinions were alike on most subjects; our future destination was also the same. Nothing would do, but that our lodgings should be under the same roof, and this was soon managed. We were inseparable friends. Who would have suspected that the day on which we took up our abode in the same dwelling, would be the beginning of long and painful trials? My friend was seized with a nervous fever, which soon increased to a degree of extraordinary violence. You may be assured that

I did not leave him ; I even concealed from his parents, as well as from my own, the danger of his state, that I might not be deprived of the pleasure of nursing him. I left him neither day nor night. I continued doing so, until I was myself attacked with the same fever, and was soon in as much danger as himself. For many days I remained at the very gates of death. My father and mother had given up all hope, when against hope I was restored to life, and to their affections, and to my friend. My poor friend ! In what a melancholy condition I found him. At the time I was taken ill, and in consequence removed from him, his parents had hastened to his bed-side, and while nursing him, they themselves were also attacked with the same disease. His father, his mother, a brother, and a sister, successively sunk under it ; and he recovered to find himself almost the sole survivor of his once happy and healthy family. I felt that I was called upon to devote myself to him, and I mourned with him from my very heart. You would hardly believe that your uncle, as you see him now, had once handled a yard measure, and sold more than one piece of cloth : but my friend's father had been in trade, and had left a quantity of goods, which it was necessary to dispose of. I assisted him in the arrangement of

the sale, the settling of accounts, and in various other labours; and perhaps the task was greater than we were equal to, in our great weakness. I often sunk, completely exhausted, under the fatigue I went through: and it is from this period that I may date the first failure of my health. It had formerly been remarkably strong, but had now received a shock which it never recovered. As to my friend, it was hardly to be wondered at that he should have yielded to discouragement. He had almost given himself up to despair. Neither of us had yet found in the gospel the only sure remedy for human misery. Besides all this, one dreadful thought was gradually gaining strength, from the deep sadness which inwardly preyed upon him; and this was the dreadful temptation to commit suicide. A single link seemed still to attach him to life; this was our mutual friendship. I failed not to assure him of my undiminished regard. He had threatened to attempt his life, if I left him for a moment. I did not leave him, I never lost sight of him. Thinking that a residence in the country might be of service to his health, I obtained my father's permission to inhabit a small country-house belonging to him, not far from the town. We remained there several months. The more his melancholy

increased, the more did I labour to win him from it. I was fearful every day that my parents should perceive the increase of his disorder, or the state of ceaseless agony in which I lived. The day came at last, when I could no longer keep up this system of concealment; my friend contrived to deceive my watchfulness, and to escape. He betrayed to others the disordered state of his mind. My parents, as well as the neighbourhood, were soon informed of it, and they ordered me to return to them immediately. ‘You must choose between him and us,’ said my father to me, seeing my irresolution and my sorrow. I obeyed, but with deep and heart felt grief.

“I now resumed my studies, after an interval of two years. I had the work of many months to get through in a few weeks, in order to be able to present myself at the yearly examination. I received in the mean time, however, several letters from my unhappy friend, who did not cease to reproach me for having left him. His illness had had the effect of changing his affection for me into bitter hatred. One day, as I was walking with a book in my hand, in a wood where we had passed many hours, he appeared before me with his face deadly pale, and his eyes looking haggard; and taking out two

pistols, he declared that as he was resolved to put an end to his life, he had sworn to do so in my presence, and thus show me to what a state my pitiless contempt had reduced him. I succeeded in arresting his hand; and throwing myself into his arms, I found words powerful enough to reach his heart. It was graciously given to me to prevail with him, and to see him in a manner restored to himself. He endeavoured to exact a promise from me that I would return to him. I answered him firmly, that he must be convinced nothing would induce me to disobey the positive commands of my father—and thus we parted.

Many months passed away before I received the long-wished for and welcome news of his entire restoration to health. He had during this interval made several excursions. Some men of talent about this time were travelling, by order of government, near our frontiers, for the purposes of science: he joined them; and the charm of their society, the new food with which they furnished his mind, and the variety of objects which engaged his attention, had diverted the channel of his thoughts. I no sooner learned this than I wrote to him, and so anxious was I to win back his friendship, that in my letter I opened my whole heart to him. I repeated to him all

that had passed between us, omitting nothing. I called upon him to bear witness to the truth of what I said, and entreated him to admit at last that my sentiments towards him had never varied. My letter preceded me but a short time. I hastened to him in person. It was indeed a happy day when I found my friend the same as in former times, and we again took sweet counsel together.

I had at last found rest, after years of anxiety, and together we resumed our beloved studies. I could now give myself up to them, without being constantly haunted and disturbed by troubled thoughts. I needed this delightful calm, and felt the benefit of it, at this period of my literary education.

Having nearly concluded my theological studies, I had to answer a question which presented itself to me in all its awfulness. ‘Does God call you to the sacred ministry of his church?’ I was not ignorant of the great wish my parents had to see me enter into holy orders. I had acquired the pleasant habit of giving way to their wishes. But on this subject of deepest importance, I felt that though it was my duty to listen to their advice, it must not be a law to me. I solemnly resolved to lay aside every mere wish to oblige, and not to present myself for

ordination, unless it were given to me to receive, without any reserve, the call of the gospel. I returned therefore to my studies, to solitary meditation, and above all to communion with God. How often have I retired to the wood of Sauvabelin, near Lausanne, and there, with the holy Bible in my hand, have I remained reading, meditating, examining my heart, and calling upon God to witness my inward conflicts, beseeching him to answer my prayers for his Divine assistance. I prayed—I prayed much, and I waited. For many years I had lived far from the ways in which the child of God should walk. Brought up in my father's house with other youths who, for the most part, were intended for a commercial life, I had insensibly imbibed a taste for it, and my future plans had all some reference to it. Afterwards, during the period of my studies, I had given way to the ungodliness of the times, and had too much forgotten what I had learned in my father's house. While I was thus insensibly led away from the right path, it pleased God to make me pass through the days of suffering I have just described to you. A bright and clear light shone forth upon me from the depth of that darkness. I had sought for happiness in friendship, and I had experienced that all human affection, if apart from

a holier, surer, and deeper love, cannot satisfy. It could not have answered the end for which I was created; and this is what the hand of the Most Merciful had just traced before me in characters of fire. I read—I felt conscious that my soul was destined for higher pursuits, and my heart was gradually converted to God. From this time, my faith was a reality. I believed from my heart, and I then entered upon the sacred ministry. My God led me into that way, where I was at every step to find His hand. He had just made me experience for the first time, what I have since done so often, that even in wrath He remembers mercy.”

It was thus that my uncle related to us his first trials, the feelings which they developed in him, and his entrance into the ministry of the gospel. From this time, and for several years after his ordination, his horizon appeared to brighten: a new career had been opened to his activity. He had an end, and it was the noblest, to live for; he had entered with holy trust, into close communion with God, the covenant God of the gospel; and he felt that henceforward he should walk by this blessed and cheering light. His father and mother beheld him with joyful satisfaction walking in the paths which

they themselves had traced out for him. His appointment as stationary, or subsidiary minister, allowed of his settling near them. And from this time his heart, so long cast down, was cheered and comforted. Many new and delightful feelings shed a charm over his existence: he wanted nothing now, but a companion to share his happiness with him. This was soon afforded him. At the Locle, in the mountains of Neuchatel, resided a family of four-and-twenty children, all of them belonging to the same father. Several of them were married, and had children of their own. When the three generations were collected together to celebrate any family festival, they were eighty in number; they appeared then as an assembled tribe. It was from this numerous family that my uncle chose his wife. In Mr. Courvoisier's house, simplicity of manners and patriarchal habits were joined to that knowledge and information which proceeds from extensive commercial connexions. I will only say of our uncle's companion, what many among you know of yourselves, that she was distinguished by a simplicity of character, at once noble and graceful. I have heard persons, who were in the habit of seeing her every day, say, that had she been blessed with health, they should not have known what

gift was wanting in her. Some kinds of maladies give a precocious ripeness to a person's character. Autumn, summer, and spring, appear to be blended together in the person thus afflicted; so that with mingled surprise, pleasure, and sadness, we discover in them all the joyous elasticity of youth, joined to the sound judgment of a more experienced age. This was the case with Madame Gonthier. Her complexion of transparent clearness, the liveliness, yet softness of her manners, her lofty and pure expression of countenance, made one of us when a child, as he still remembers, regard her as one of those angelic beings described to us as hovering between heaven and earth, and to whom all human passions are unknown. She was exactly the wife for my uncle; exactly suited to his heart, and the chaste, yet ardent sensibility of his imagination. His attachment for her appeared to be as strong as it well could be, but she acquired a yet stronger title to it, when she made him a father. The mother of his little Louise, and his little Francois, had opened to him a new world of happiness and delightful hopes. His gratitude to God increased as he received these pledges of affection. He was impressed with a feeling of respect and admiration, in witnessing the solicitude and devotion

with which God fills the tender heart of a mother. His wife and he were becoming every day clearer and more necessary to each other; every day appeared to strengthen the bond of their union, and this union formed their mutual happiness. Short-lived happiness! Years of transient delight! How soon they were to end!

A first trial was sent them in the death of their little boy. His fresh bloom, and his fair clustering curls, gave a false promise of health to this child. He died when scarcely a year old. Their hearts were bleeding from this still recent wound, when another affliction was preparing for them. A storm was gathering, and it was one which was to strike deep into the heart of our uncle: and which, becoming more and more threatening, was at length to deprive him of his greatest earthly happiness. He saw its approach; from this time he could no longer conceal from himself, that the lungs of his wife were attacked by a hopeless disease. Already he perceived that all his care to preserve a life, the springs of which were affected, would be in vain. He was only permitted to use every means to prolong its course. The least fatigue, and now every thing had become a fatigue, the slightest change of the atmosphere, (and in Switzerland,

the seasons change often very suddenly,) the return of winter especially, affected the poor invalid, and brought on fresh attacks of her complaint. The only hope that now remained, was from the effects of a more genial climate. Our uncle would have done every thing to save one whose life was more precious to him than his own. He did not, therefore, hesitate to leave his country, and his father's house, to seek from a milder sky, the restoration of her health, who was so dear to him. An appointment was vacant in the church at Nismes; he asked for it, obtained it, and soon the carriage which contained his wife and child, set off on slow journeys towards the south.

When M. Gonthier became one of the ministers of the church at Nismes, (it was in the spring of 1805,) France was but just recovering from the storms of the Revolution. In most places, the churches had been deserted. At Nismes, out of a population of fifteen thousand protestants, scarcely fifty persons attended the ordinance of the Lord's supper. We remember hearing our uncle say, that many young persons longing to approach the table of the Lord, and yet not daring to brave the shame of doing so openly, were accustomed to go to Cevennes, a distance of ten leagues, to receive, in a retired village,

the bread of the holy communion. Amusements, the theatres, the labours of business, and above all, the stirring sounds of war, engrossed the minds of all. Every thing was as God to them, except the God of the Bible.

It will, therefore, be easy to imagine the difficulties encountered by the new minister, who had come to live among them, full as he was of faith and zeal. His first wish was to recall the people to their spiritual teachers. "O my God," he prayed, "give to thy servant a voice, not less powerful than that which draws the multitude away from Thee;" and that his practice might agree with the spirit of his prayer, he studied to preach as plainly, as winningly, and yet as forcibly as he could. He possessed that which is the greatest help to eloquence—faith. In his ideas he was not below his congregation. His imagination was inexhaustible; his thoughts were as lively, as quick, and as striking as those of any inhabitant of the south; but his memory was not good. As this caused him much trouble, he imposed upon himself as a duty, to learn his sermons by heart so perfectly, that in delivering them, this defect should not be a hinderance to him. "I never preached," he said to us, "without a three-fold preparation: First, I engraved upon my

mind, the ideas and the expressions of my sermons: secondly, I strove to overcome the faults of my pronunciation, and to acquire a slow and impressive manner, that the thoughts which animated me, might reach the hearts of those who heard me: my third preparation was, to make myself so completely master of my sentences, that they might present themselves to my mind naturally, and in their proper order." His memory from this time ceased to interrupt the freedom of his thoughts, or to make them appear in any way constrained. His style of preaching became free and persuasive; he attracted the public; the churches again began to be filled, and the preaching of God's word was again listened to.

But this was not sufficient. He felt that he must descend from the pulpit, and enter every house, to preach the gospel, and to apply it to the need of every one. To effect this, M. Gonthier profited by the custom which, in spite of the decay of religion in the church of Nismes, was still kept up there; that of calling the minister to attend at death-beds. This became the means of making him known among the families there, and gave him many opportunities of causing them to hear the words of prayer and exhortation. It became one of the ways by which he

succeeded in gaining their confidence and affection. They soon came to him from all parts for the benefit of his advice. In one of his wife's letters, I find written, "Persons are always coming to my husband to open their hearts to him, and to consult him on particular subjects, more especially on very delicate ones. More than once persons have come to him after the sermon, to make known to him their distress of mind, and to ask for his prayers. I wish you could see all the good he is permitted to do in this place. What a blessed calling is his ! one of reconciliation and love ! . . . I sometimes say, that it is also a painful one, when we are anxious to follow it to the utmost of our power ; for there is no limit to occasions of doing good."

M. Gonthier's time was indeed so entirely taken up with the duties of his ministry, that a few of the evening hours were all that remained for him to devote to his wife and child. Some intimate friends joined them at that time. They were of the number of those who are dear to us as ourselves. Their affection had been of rapid growth ; but their devotedness to him was proved in the time of trial. This little assembly did not long remain unbroken. Those who composed it were scattered ; but they have never ceased to live in communion with each other, and to feel

united by closer and yet closer bonds of intimacy; for they loved each other in Christ, and in the spirit of holiness. My uncle has often spoken to us of his friends at Nismes, but he never could express half what he felt towards them.

You who were his beloved friends knew his Louise. She also was your friend. When you saw her better, you shared his hopes with him; and when the disease again attacked her, you were partakers of his grief. You well know that only a short respite was allowed her. Her sufferings returned, her weakness increased, and she was soon brought to that state of debility, in which the patient has alternate days of amendment and relapse. Such is generally the case in a lingering consumption. You know the life of our good uncle during this anxious season. The day he devoted to the manifold duties of his ministry, and the night to watching by the bedside of his dear invalid. This delightful privilege he never would resign to any one. Who can tell the bitter anguish of his heart at that time? But who also can tell the secret happiness they were still permitted to enjoy in communion with each other, and in the unreserved confidence of a union to which nothing on earth can be compared? Who, in short, can

tell the still greater and more lasting comfort they found in the reality of their faith in Christ? He has, however, himself partly told us something of this, in a letter written by him on the 12th of May, 1809, the anniversary of his great loss, to a friend who had often asked him for some account of this mournful event.

“12th May, 1809.

“What a day has just commenced, my dear friend! It was on this same day last year that the ties were broken which bound me to my sweetest friend, to her who had the first claim to that endearing name. But do I say broken! No, they are not broken. My heart will never cease to cherish my beloved wife. It will always be full of the remembrance of her. The eleven years we passed together in the closest intimacy have formed a bond between us which nothing can dissever. And did we not love each other in God our Saviour, with the earnest desire of being more and more closely united one with the other in Him, and of meeting together after this life, in his presence? Ah, no, we are not quite separated. Perhaps her thoughts now cannot come down to me. Perhaps it is not given to the blessed to behold what is passing on earth, because they would witness too much sorrow, too much corruption, and because their souls might

then be grieved by such contemplations. Yet perchance they are permitted to look upon earthly things, without their happiness being diminished, because they see them from a higher point of view, and under a different aspect. Perchance they may have the privilege of observing what is passing on this scene of our probation, once the place of their pilgrimage, and of sympathizing with the friends they have left there. Perchance my own wife is even now beholding me.

“If *she* has seen me leave off writing to you for a while, to lift up my heart in prayer, beseeching the God of all mercy to look in pity on my wretchedness, and to strengthen my weakness; beseeching Him, above all things, to help me to triumph over all earthly temptation, over all my own evil propensities, over every thing that might prevent my re-union with her in heaven: if she has seen the earnestness with which I breathed this prayer, perhaps her glorified spirit has rejoiced in the sight, and from her blessed abode she is smiling on me.

“But a veil is drawn before the nature and extent of our present connexion. This veil was necessary, since it exists, (for there is wisdom in every decree of the Most High,) I cannot withdraw it. Yet I feel my soul still as closely united to hers, and I cannot think, therefore, that

hers can be completely estranged from every thing that concerns mine. At least I know that if she can no longer return to me, I can, through the great compassion of our blessed Saviour, go one day to her, to the place where she abides, where there will be no more sorrow, no more tears, but all will be perfect bliss, and I shall be reunited to her for ever. What power there is in this thought to support me, to heal the deep wound of my heart! I shall surely have strength to collect together the circumstances of her last hours, which you have so long asked for, my dear friend, and which I have reserved till now, to tell you. The remembrance of them is very painful to me, yet it is softened by the thoughts of her firmness, her calm composure, her deep piety, and her truly christian resignation.

“ You know, that sometimes when death is about to inflict its last blow, it seems to delay it for a time; and the sick person, to all appearance, revives for a short season. It was thus during the last night that she remained upon earth; she found herself a little better, than on the days and nights preceding; she gained a little strength, and I blessed God most fervently. I besought Him with earnestness to improve this change. She slept little, but she was less agitated. I read to her at different times, some

chapters in the Holy Scriptures. The reading of them had become the chief desire of her soul, and its greatest comfort. Her calmness, however, was not of long duration. Towards morning, her most dreadful sufferings began. These words escaped her lips—‘Happy are those who enjoy rest!’ She pronounced them in so calm and gentle a manner, that they could only be regarded as the aspiration of a devoted spirit seeking its God, and lifting its thoughts to the mansions of eternal rest, and not in the slightest degree as a murmur. Nevertheless her soul appeared to reproach itself for having suffered even these words to escape; so near was she to heaven. They seemed to her not sufficiently in unison with that perfect resignation to God’s will, to which she had been enabled to habituate herself, and which led her not to wish, even in thought, that one of her sufferings, sent as they were, by her heavenly Father, should be spared her. She told me, she wished to be left a few moments entirely to her own thoughts, and to communion with God. Afterwards she said to me, ‘Now I have prayed; and, blessed be God, I hope from this moment to be free from every inquietude.’ With what an expression did she accompany these words! an expression of deep humility, and of holy calm. Her agonies

increased. About eight o'clock, she asked to see her little girl, her beloved child, to whose education she had devoted herself in the most affecting manner, notwithstanding her weakness. I told her that Madame de D—— had just taken her home with her, but that I would send for her instantly. She thought a moment, then said, 'No; it is better she should not see me.' This dear child, just herself recovered from a serious illness, was still very weak: her mother feared that the sight of her would occasion too great a shock to the little girl; and at once sacrificing, as was her constant habit, her own gratification to the good of others, she resolved to deprive herself of a consolation so natural and so delightful; that of beholding for the last time on earth, her beloved child. I insisted that she should be brought to her, if only for a moment. 'No;' she answered, 'it is better not, my dear husband, you know all I would say, you will tell her all'

"Oh, yes! *I know all*, and you also, my dear friend, know what a mother my child had. I will strive to make her feel this. *I know* that the first wish of her heart was to dedicate the precious charge committed to her, to the service of God her Saviour, and to prepare her for eternity. And I will go on with the work which she has

begun with such zeal and such wisdom. Were I not to be diligent in the performance of this duty, how unworthy should I be of that confidence which my blessed wife reposed in me at her last hour.

“Alas ! her strength was rapidly decreasing. She now spoke with great difficulty ; but her eyes were raised to heaven, and appeared to brighten, as with a foretaste of the perfect happiness which there awaited her. She opened her lips ; my whole soul was watching to catch her words. She said, ‘Death God heaven !’ Thus in the extremity of her weakness, she sought to prepare me for the blow which awaited me ; to comfort and strengthen my soul, and to keep me from an excess of grief. Her sufferings were at times very severe : my heart was pierced at beholding them. ‘Ah !’ she said, with a calm peacefulness known to the child of God alone, ‘what are my sufferings to those of my Saviour !’

“For a short time, she appeared to revive a little. She felt it was but for a very short time ; and her strong affection for her relations, her friends, and for her husband, would not allow her to lose these moments. ‘Listen to me, my love,’ she said ; then with a voice slow indeed, but clear and firm, she charged me to make her most

affectionate farewell to every individual of my family, of her own, and to each and all of our common friends. Her strength failed her for a time; she was unable to proceed. Soon after she continued, ‘My love, lift up my arms.’ I lifted them up, and she put them round my neck. Oh! how can I describe to you what I then felt, when so many and such various feelings rent my heart, and pierced to the inmost depths of my soul. ‘My beloved,’ she said, with an expression of tenderness impossible to describe, ‘my admirable husband, I thank you for all your goodness to me; God will repay you: I cannot—I never could.’ Ah! far from this, it was I who owed every thing to her. All that a human being could experience of happiness, I had known with her. Her arms were still around me, and in the inexpressible sorrow which filled my heart, feeling unable to sustain myself in my own strength, I called upon Him who is ever ready to help us, to strengthen my weakness. I prayed aloud for her and for myself. We remained thus, our hearts close to each other, for the last time uniting together in christian communion. When our prayer was ended, I said, to soften the agony of these moments; ‘My beloved wife, perhaps the Lord will grant us yet again to love

Him, and pray to Him together on earth.' 'I do not think it,' she answered; 'but if He should, we would assist each other, would we not, my beloved? to purify our hearts, with His all-powerful help, from every earthly motive, and, in all we do, to have a single eye to His glory. This is the one thing needful. Every thing else is but vanity.' May these words be for ever engraven upon my soul! They were the last legacy of my dying wife, and by them the Lord seemed to make a solemn appeal to my soul, calling upon me to seek Him above all things. May He in his mercy help me, for without Him I can do nothing!

"My wife now appeared to undergo less positive suffering; her strength was likewise failing fast. Who that had seen her in these last moments, and had beheld her sorrowful expression when she turned to me, and her calm peacefulness when she looked towards heaven, and the foretaste of everlasting happiness which appeared to be given to her spirit in the midst of her suffering,—who that had seen this, would not have felt how great are the privileges of the child of God?

"'My dearest love,' I said to her, 'has not our most earnest desire ever been to be united in the faith of our common Saviour, not only

for time, but for eternity?' 'Oh! yes, for eternity,' she answered, raising her eyes to heaven, as if to say, 'I go to wait for thee there.'

"Her last hour drew nigh, and yet she found strength to speak a few more words to me. She gave me a last kiss. Alas! I felt the cold chill of death already on her lips. Once more those lips unclosed; it was to breathe out, though with difficulty, the sacred name of 'Jesus Christ!' She could say no more. Her blessed Saviour, who heard this her last appeal to Him, called her, and received her redeemed and purified spirit, to dwell with Him in everlasting happiness, and reunited her to that dear child who had gone before her.

"I remain behind in this place of pilgrimage and trial, with her dear surviving child. I have still duties to fulfil.... O my friend, I beseech you pray for me, that I may receive help from God, and not be found wanting in devotedness to my charge: so that, after having lived a life like hers, I may die as she died, and at length restore to her the beloved child she has left with me!"

His little girl was ten years of age when she thus became the only earthly comfort to her father, and the object of his most devoted

affection. Though so young, she was an intelligent little companion to him. Her home education, the conversation and the example of her parents, and the touching and mutual affection which united them, and illness still more than education, had developed prematurely the qualities of her heart and mind. Her feelings were very acute. The gentleness of her disposition was joined to a liveliness which she had much difficulty in subduing. Some time after the death of her mother, she acquired the habit of writing every two or three days, and regularly at the end of each week, a short journal of her life. In it she notes down every thing she does, gives an account of all she reads, of her walks with her father, of all she saw, felt, and observed. She watches strictly over her own conduct, blames herself for the faults she commits, and appears in every thing to consult the happiness of the parent to whom she owed far more than her existence. Some extracts from this journal will serve to show us what he was to her, and what she was to her father. It begins on the 4th of May, 1809.

“When I have passed the day in a rational manner, it does make me feel so happy, and it does my dear papa so much good, and I am sure he needs it, especially at this time. Ah!

if I do not behave well for my own sake, I ought for his, and in remembrance of my dear mamma, who always tried to make him happy. I feel how much I ought to do for him, after the sad loss he has met with, and after all the care he has taken, and still takes of me every day. How many reasons I have for trying to be good !

“Friday, 12th May. I will try to begin from to-day, without putting it off any longer, a life which may give real pleasure to my dear papa. Yes, I promise him to do so on this day, which brings with it so many recollections of my dear mamma. I will try to fulfil the wish of her heart, and which has now become the wish of mine also, to do every thing to please him, at least as far as lies in my power. I will strive to overcome all my bad habits, that I may not be so unworthy of all the pains my dear mamma took with me while she lived, forgetting herself, and thinking only of me; and also of all the care which you take with me too, my very dear papa.

“Tuesday, 6th June. I was in my good place to-day, both morning and evening. But I forgot to say what my good place was. When papa has been pleased with me on account of my temper, my work, and when I have not hesitated once in any of my lessons, then I sit

by his side at table, and not opposite to him, as I generally do."

"Tuesday, 27th June. I behaved well morning and evening, and I sat near dearest papa at table. Well, and what has it cost me? A little more watchfulness over my temper, and a little more care about my lessons. And have I not been well repaid, not only during the time that I was striving with myself, but afterwards, by seeing papa pleased, and, more than all, by the pleasant thought that I had done what was right?

"Friday, 22nd September. There has been such a very beautiful sunset this evening. The sky was at first of a clear yellow, and then there came a soft cloud, of the same colour, which gradually spread itself over the whole space of the heavens. As the sun disappeared, the whole changed to the most delicate rose colour, and looked so very beautiful through the willows.

"Tuesday, 23rd January. I have been ill with a cold and fever, but I thank God I am now fast recovering. Papa, as in all my other illnesses, has devoted himself entirely to me. He alone sat up with me every night during my illness, which lasted a long time; indeed he never left me all the time, nor does he leave me now, except to attend to his duties. We walk

out together from twelve till one o'clock, and papa always leaves his studies at that time, when the weather is fine, though it is at the hour he generally feels most disposed to read and write."

The journal here gives an account of a journey into Switzerland, which they took in the spring. Louise describes, in a lively manner, the delight that she felt in beholding so many interesting objects, and in the new impressions she received. The love of her relations and of her father's friends towards her affected her deeply. She was very sorry to be obliged to leave them. She says, "I must leave them, and even for some years; but though this time may appear long to me, it will soon pass. I shall spend it with papa. We shall write to each other. These separations will not last for ever. A time will come when there will be no more partings, and when those who belong to God will dwell together in everlasting happiness. I leave you therefore, my dear relations, with less regret. I shall see you again, and perhaps in two years.

"From Monday, the 3rd, to Saturday, the 13th of September. I was taken ill with a fever at Lyons, which kept us there twelve days; and during that time my dearest papa nursed me in

his usual way, that is, he quite forgot himself, and thought only of me.

“Monday, 29th September. I have had the pleasure of receiving a beautiful little Canary bird, which Mademoiselle Meynier has been kind enough to rear for me while I was in Switzerland. I promise papa, in this journal, to take great care of it, to clean out its cage very often, and to mind and keep the door shut; as I know that, when any one has been so kind as to give me a bird, it is not right, at the end of a few days, when it is no longer a novelty, to neglect it, or not to attend to it quite as carefully as at first.

“Saturday, 13th October. Papa has been good enough this week to rent a very pretty garden near our house, and yet in the country. From the terrace of the garden we have a beautiful view. There is also a charming summer-house, plenty of shade, many kinds of fruit, and a very pretty arbour. I ought to be very grateful to papa for being at so much expense for me.

“Saturday, 27th October. Yesterday was my birthday. I have entered my thirteenth year. Indeed, when I think how old I am, I am alarmed at the thoughts of how much I shall have to do when I again begin my lessons, to make up for lost time. Let me at least, till

then, try and do what I am allowed to do well and diligently. I think I am trying to do this.

“Winter has set in during the last four days. I am writing by the fireside, and very glad to be there. I comfort myself with the thought that even in winter we shall have some fine days. Besides, is not every thing ordered by the wise and good providence of God, who is ever watching over his creatures?

“Thursday, 18th April. Yesterday the weather was so very sultry, that from the dryness of the earth, the dust in the roads, and the great heat of the sun, we might have fancied ourselves in the middle of summer. To-day it is raining, and the rain will do a great deal of good to the garden, if the cold does not return, and if the fine days do.”

Gentle child, the fine days were never to return to thee! These concluding lines in the journal were the last that she ever wrote in it. Louise, my sister,—for you called me your brother,—young as you were, your grave was prepared for you; your place below, in your mother’s grave, was marked out for you, and your place above, near that mother in heaven. I feel such perfect faith in the mercy of God, that I fully believe this. And he whom we both called our father, he whose comfort and delight you

were, he was no longer permitted to hear the sound of your voice on earth. He watered with his tears the fresh earth which covered your mortal remains. His heavy grief so bowed him down at first, that he could scarcely lift up his eyes to heaven; nor was it till after the lapse of many days that he was able to give utterance to his feelings, in the following letter, written to the intimate friend of his wife.*

“23rd June, 1811.

“This has been a trying week to me, my kind friend. Every day has been a day of sorrow; and alas! what have I now to look forward to? Another trial has been added to those formerly sent to me. I had lost my son. I had lost his beloved mother. My last remaining comfort, my only daughter, has been taken from me. They are all gone, and I am left in wretched loneliness, separated for ever upon earth from all those beings whom I loved so very dearly. Without the gospel, what would now become of me! Were I not a christian, or, rather, did I not earnestly desire to become

* Louise died at Montpellier, whither her father had taken her to consult a very clever physician. Like Young, the poet, he brought the body of his child back in its coffin. A few days afterwards he ascended the pulpit, and preached on Abraham's offering up Isaac.

one, as much in heart and practice as I am in faith—did not this earnest desire animate my heart, how unbearable would existence now be to me !

“But I most earnestly beseech the Lord to grant me such a measure of His grace, that the trials He has thought fit to send me may not find me rebellious against His purposes concerning me, and that from this day they may draw me nearer to Him ; that they may be the means of showing me the nothingness of all the joys of this world, and destroy the vile and earthly feelings of my heart. If He, in his mercy, should grant this my prayer, I feel there will still be peace for me in this world.

“O my friend, pray for me. Implore the Father of mercies to order the rest of my life according to these my present purposes. Entreat Him to give me the fulness of His strength, which is made perfect in our weakness. Pray that from this moment He will condescend to put into my heart those thoughts and feelings most pleasing in His sight.

“May the holy resignation of Job and of David be also mine ! the godly obedience of Abraham be also my obedience ! The sacrifice has not only been commanded, it is already accomplished. Oh ! that I may humbly bow

to the will of the Most High without a single murmur. Do I not know that His thoughts are not as our thoughts, and that His ways are far above our ways? Do I not know that He has proved Himself a God of mercy to my Louise, and to my two children, in removing them from the miseries of this life, and taking them to Himself? Shall I repine at the happiness they are enjoying? Shall I think only of myself? Rather let me bless the all-wise and merciful God, that, in portioning out our sorrow and happiness, He has appointed that the happiness should fall to the lot of those dear objects of my affections, and the sorrow to me alone; yes, to myself alone, to whom they seemed so necessary, and to whom the loss of them may be made so profitable, unless the end which the Lord had in view is defeated by my own wilfulness. O my friend, those dear ones are now under the shadow of His wings, fed with the best things from His mansion, filled with those pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore! Blessed thought! May it continue to support my heart! May it become my consolation! It is perhaps the only happiness I can now enjoy on earth.

“O my Louise! O my children! have you met, and have you recognised each other? I

will hope so. I see you all united, loving one another with a perfect love, which can never again be disturbed, which can dread no more a separation; loving one another in the very presence of God your Saviour, and united together in Him, filled with that fulness of love for Him which forms the glorious happiness of those in heaven. Oh that I could feel this love while here below, at least as far as our present weakness will allow. I know that it is to prepare my heart for the reception of this love, that God has thus tried me. He designed to show me the littleness of earthly things, and to make me feel deeply that there is for us but one thing needful—but one good part, which can never be taken away, and that I must, before all things, desire it, ask for it, and seek it. How much I need your prayers, that the end which God has purposed in sending me my trials may not be lost through my senseless neglect!”

The friend of his wife thus replied to him: “I entreat you to remember the affecting words of your dear child, a few weeks before her death. ‘I love you, dear papa, as much as I can love any one; but I feel this is not enough for all you have done for me. Happily my heart grows larger every day.’ It was God Himself who put such thoughts into her heart, and He has re-

served to Himself the work of perfecting at once her enlightened spirit. No, you are not parted; or, if you are, it is but for a little time, compared with the eternity which awaits you."

Fifteen years after this event, my uncle, in talking to us one day without any reserve, let these words escape his lips: "I am sure that it was on those two days, on the 12th of May and the 17th of June,—when my heart was almost broken,—I am now quite sure it was then that God showed the greatest love towards me." But these words of his will be better understood after the following account has been read.

We must return to Nimes, and to the path now appointed for M. Gonthier to walk in.

After the loss of his wife and child, his thoughts were continually turned to one object, the duties of his ministry. From this time the distinguishing features in his life were, humble resignation, the entire surrender of himself to God, and the desire of dedicating all his strength, and all that he possessed, to his sacred calling. As earth could no longer bestow on him any thing so dear as those that had been taken from him, it was evident that God had set him free from all those bonds which often repress and confine to earth the noblest affections in man. By nature he was gifted with what is

seldom to be met with, a heart to which devotedness, the devotedness of all its powers to one sole object, is happiness. In him, this entire surrender of self took now a character of deep, pure, and decided godliness. It appeared as if the inexhaustible spring of affection which he had felt for his wife and child, now flowed forth towards all his fellow-creatures. He felt with them in all their joys, but more particularly in all their sorrows. You know how completely he had the power of identifying himself with others. This sympathy had never been a mere poetical theory in him; but from this time it became every day more and more an active and powerful christian principle, which enlarging his heart, and increasing as it were his sense of feeling, made him enter into the sufferings of others as if they had been his own. He was still the same peculiarly pleasing person. He lost none of the graces of his mind, or of the lovely symmetry of his character; but, initiated by sorrow into the experience of human life, he received the power of administering to the comfort of others in a higher degree than is generally granted to mortal man. How many doors were then opened to him! How frequently was he sent for! Notwithstanding the delicate purity of his character, the most wretched

and the vilest approached him without fear. They knew that all their feelings would be understood by him. Bitter anguish of soul, either transient or lasting, the sorrows of him who had not suffered in vain, the errors of him who had been long seeking to know his own heart—with all of these he had a fellow-feeling. The doctrine of the natural corruption of the human heart, with which he had become experimentally acquainted, had produced in him a deep spring of tenderness and gentle pity for others. It had taught him, when he beheld their failings, to think of his own, and to look upon their sinfulness as the common inheritance which he shared with them. This made him carry up to God their unrighteousness with his own, and mourn over their sin as over his own burden, and implore for them the same mercy he entreated for himself. The wonderful intuition he had acquired of reading the thoughts of others, he never, I am convinced, took advantage of, by turning it against any. He never made use of this knowledge, but for the benefit of the person who applied to him. He delighted in every happy disposition, every noble gift of human intellect, every thing which reminds us of God, and is pleasing in man. “Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely,

whatsoever things are of good report," he loved to dwell upon with all the warmth and enthusiasm of a young heart. Neither his afflictions, nor his experience in after life, altered this disposition, which proceeded from the spirit of love within him. The following is one of the many proofs which might be brought forward in confirmation of these statements.

An old soldier called one day at M. Gonthier's house, half grumbling, yet half ashamed, and in fact very much embarrassed at the step he was taking. At length he said, "I do not know, Sir, what business I have here; but, to tell you the truth, my wife has made me promise to come and see you. She is a kind soul, and I do not like to vex her; so here I am." M. Gonthier made him sit down; and then the veteran, in a few words, stated that he was married to a very pious woman, to whom he was much attached. For his part he could not tell why, but she was always reasoning with him, because he was without any religion. He must say, that being a soldier himself, and having been born and bred among soldiers, he had never heard of such things, but his wife wearied him with the repetition of them. He had borne this pretty well till now, but she had lately heard a sermon of M. Gonthier's on this text: "What

knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?" and ever since, she had not left him a moment's peace, till he had promised to do what he was now doing. "Forgive my causing you so much useless trouble, Sir," he added, as he concluded: "but I know you are a kind man, and you will agree with me, that it was better to act as I have done, for the sake of peace at home." M. Gonthier was pleased with the frankness of this honest soldier; and in this first conversation he tried to win his confidence, and succeeded in making him wish for a second interview. After his second visit, the soldier expressed a desire to be instructed in the doctrines of religion. When he came the third time, he said, "For the future, Sir, I will come into your house by the front door, and not by the back door;" for several of my uncle's visitors preferred the most private entrance, being half ashamed of coming to him. After he had in this manner paid M. Gonthier several more visits, he said to him, "Why should I add to your labours, Sir, when I can be taught with the children? I shall for the future come with the catechumens." He accordingly did so. When Easter approached, his pastor asked him if he wished to be admitted to the table of the Lord; and upon his answering in the affirmative, again

inquired when he would wish his private admission to take place. "Private!—and why private? Ah! Sir, it is not fit that at the time I receive such a wonderful favour from my God I should seem ashamed of him. I shall go with the children, Sir." And the veteran, though a man of advanced age, came to church in the midst of the youthful catechumens. Thus was he taught of God, and guided by Him in his heavenward course.

The field of M. Gonthier's exertions became more and more extended. Ever humble, and doing the work of God without ostentation, the effects of his ministry were becoming, notwithstanding, more visible every day. Many souls were won back to be at peace with God, and with themselves; and in many families the God of love and peace began to take up his abode.

One day he went to see a widow, who had but lately lost her husband. Her eight children were divided against each other by self-interest, to such a degree, that the hope of reconciling them seemed vain. It was all he could do to make his voice heard, amid the loud abuse they were heaping upon one another. At length, collecting all his strength, and thinking only of the good that might be done among them, he

succeeded in being heard and attended to. He was enabled to convince them, and to touch their hearts. They became deeply affected, and promised to forget their differences; and, when they had been reconciled to each other, they went at once to ask their mother's forgiveness. They all knelt meekly down with that blessed peacemaker, and offered up their prayers and thanksgivings to the God of peace, whose Spirit had just descended upon their household.

This holy and benevolent activity knew no limit but in the strength of my uncle; nay, every day it exceeded his strength. Not only protestants, but many roman catholics came to him. He was the means, in many instances, of reconciling parties where there existed rooted enmity, owing to fifty years of religious persecution, and the effects of the French revolution. From the esteem in which he was held, and from the friendship of his colleagues, M. Gonthier even effected a happy improvement in the interior of the consistory, and that body was reorganized in a manner which extended its influence, and rendered its working more efficient. The different objects to which my uncle directed his attention thus became daily more numerous, and at length every hour was so filled up, that the only time he had

for the composition of his sermons, was as he went from one house to another, or from one appointment to another. Formerly he obtained some rest, however disturbed it might be by sorrow, when he returned home to his wife and child. After seeing his little girl in bed, it sometimes happened that he spent, by way of recreation, a few hours in the society of his friends. But now, his labours engrossed the whole of his time. To show how small a portion of it he devoted to his own amusement during the nine years he passed at Nimes, he never saw the sea, which is only a few leagues distant. Even his nights were not his own; for either they were made restless by thinking over what he had to do, or he had sometimes to rise as often as three or four times in the night to attend to his sick parishioners. He soon lost his sleep, and was by degrees brought to that state of alternate excitement, languor, and suffering, of which we have been witnesses. A journey he took into Switzerland proved of little benefit to him, because he was so anxious to return to his duties that he hurried it too much; added to which, the chief part of the time was taken up in trying to establish a communication between the protestant churches in the south of France, and those of French

Switzerland. He had returned to resume his duties with the superadded burden of excessive labour and illness, when he received a letter from his father, which caused his removal from the church at Nîmes, and changed all his projects for the future.

We must, in order to understand this letter, remind you of the motive which had made M. Gonthier leave his parents and his country. It was the hope of saving the lives of his wife and child. When he lost them, it was natural for his father and mother to think they had some right to urge his return. They were both more than seventy years old, and the infirmities of age were advancing upon them. This being the case, they could not conceal from their son how inexpressibly dear he was to them, or with what delight they looked forward to the hope of dying in his arms. They had first made known their wishes to him very soon after the death of his little girl; but the consistory of the church of Nîmes had, by the most pressing entreaties, prevailed upon them at that time not to insist on their son's return. Another year had elapsed, and to their own private reasons for now wishing to recall him, a new one was added. They knew how much his health had suffered from exertions beyond his strength, and therefore

they no longer hesitated in expressing their wish for his return ; and this they did in so decided a manner, that it was evident their determination was no longer to be shaken by the entreaties of the consistory.

They thus answered the objections made to their demand: “ We feel how much it must cost our son to leave Nimes ; but we know how severely his health has suffered, and we are convinced that the labours required from the pastor of so considerable a church as yours, would entirely destroy it. We think also that it would cost him something to be absent from us during our last hours, and not to attend upon us, and receive our last blessing. You tell us that our son may spend as much of his time with us as we wish ; only you entreat that the tie which binds him to your church may not be broken, and that, still preserving the title of your pastor, he may put a suffragan minister in his place for an indefinite period. We could wish it were in our power, gentlemen, to express to you how deeply grateful we feel for your liberal proposals, and to agree to your proposal. But experience would soon prove the inexpediency of such a plan. Our dear son would never bear to be called minister of a church, when he did not fulfil the duties attached to it. He would

never consent to remain unemployed and useless. He must have some occupation, but it should be one which will not be too much for his strength. There will be no difficulty in finding this in some parish in our canton, where, should his health require it, he can also engage an assistant for a shorter or a longer period. On considering all this, we hope that you will not blame us for persisting to urge the return of our son. We think that reason approves the plan which our affection alone had at first dictated."

When our grandfather wrote thus, he had no doubt how his son would act. My uncle, who had ever looked upon his father's wishes as a law, begged of the consistory to accept his resignation. "We accept it, because we must," answered the president, from the midst of an assembly all deeply affected; "but we do so with unfeigned sorrow. For the space of nine years you have served and adorned this church by your christian devotedness, your piety, and your virtues. You have been indeed a shining light among us; and you leave behind you a lasting remembrance of the blessings of your ministry." *

* Extract from the archives of the consistory, and sent to us by M. Gonthier's friends.

Such was the departure of M. Gonthier from this church, to which he was bound by so many endearing ties. He had already refused to leave it for Montauban, where the professorship of theology had been offered to him; and likewise for Paris, when the situation of pastor there had been pressed upon him; but he at once obeyed the command of his aged father. Again did his tears fall over the graves of his wife and child; they flowed also at parting with so many valued friends, and on taking his last leave of the field of his labours, that field already ploughed up, and where he had been permitted to sow the good seed so abundantly. From that time he treasured up in his heart the memory of the past, and, looking forward to the aged parents, who were awaiting his return, in a spirit of humble resignation, he set forward on his journey towards the mountains of his native country.

We will take our leave with him of the wealthy, industrious, and busy city, to follow him to a very different scene. Amid the chain of mountains which separates Switzerland from France, are two long narrow defiles, where lie the two smallest parishes, I believe, in the canton de Vaud. Rocks, covered with dark fir-trees, surround every habitation there. These

two villages, Ballaigues, which is situated on the road from Paris to Lausanne, and St. Cergues, on the route to Italy, may be seen as you coast along the lake of Geneva. M. Gonthier was about to become successively the humble pastor of these two remote villages. They are both situated on the extreme frontier. It appeared as if my uncle wished to keep as near as possible to his much-loved France. He had, however, now left the orange groves, the balmy air, the agreeable wit, and the animated conversation of the south. The unceasing bustle of a large city he had now exchanged for the monotonous sound of the woodman's axe. He would have little now to show the friends from France who came to see him, but the chalets* of shepherds, and the various stages in the art of cheese-making. Let them, however, beware of attempting to visit him before June, or after September. I remember upon one occasion accompanying my sister at Easter to St. Cergues, where she was to be admitted for the first time by her uncle to the holy communion. We both experienced a feeling of sadness in leaving behind us the green plains and the cherry trees laden with blossoms, and finding, as we ascended the

* Huts on the mountains, where the Swiss shepherd resides during the short summer season.

mountain, nothing but snow, ice, and the piercing cold of winter. To leave Languedoc for such a place appeared indeed a banishment, and a cruel one. It would have been so to him, had it not been for his simple faith and trust in God; that true faith which gives life to the desert, which reanimates and imparts beauty to every object around, and becomes in him who possesses it a secret source of inexhaustible peace and happiness. By it, the two villages of Ballaigues and St. Cergues were transformed into pleasant and endeared abodes to M. Gonthier; indeed, so dear did they become to him, that he would never have left them, had not his impaired health made it, after a time, a duty to descend to the milder and more equable climate of the plain.

The first parish that M. Gonthier was appointed to, was the *pastoral suffragance** of Ballaigues. It was the situation to which his rank in the church entitled him, according to the established law of the Canton de Vaud. The parish consisted of about three or four hundred souls; and this was just what he desired, mea-

* This name is given in Switzerland to a small number of unimportant parishes, which give an intermediate rank and revenue to those who serve them, between pastor and *suffragan*, or curate.

suring his wishes by his strength, and anxious to become the pastor of his flock in the strict acceptation of the word, by being known to each individual, as the friend, the father, and adviser of them all. Such he soon became. The time he spent at Ballaigues was a happy time to him, rendered so by the blessed intercourse which subsisted between himself and his parishioners, and by the confidence and affection which they showed towards him. The anxious endeavour of them all was, how they could best prove their love to him. I well remember the respect and affection which even the youngest children had learned to feel towards him, and how they would collect together, with smiles of pleasure on their faces, to see him pass; or sometimes steal gently up to him, and with a look of delight place their little hands in his.

Among his parishioners were two men who possessed books of a pernicious tendency, which they were in the habit of freely circulating; they soon, however, brought all their books to M. Gonthier, to dispose of them as he pleased. One of these men said to my uncle, when he was about to leave Ballaigues, "We ought never to have known you, Sir, or never to have lost you."

The following circumstance proved the attachment of the people towards their minister. They heard that he was desirous of purchasing a small wood, which he might consider as a sort of quiet retreat, and which might be an object to him in his walks. They at once begged him to come and choose from among all the woods in the district that which he would prefer; and when he had chosen one, they begged he would accept it for as long a time as he might remain among them. Nay, not satisfied with this, they brought thither stones, boards, and moss, for the *reposoirs*,* which he intended to construct there. Then fearing that the cattle might do some injury to that part of the wood, very early one morning they all set off for the spot, laden with the necessary materials for an enclosure, and, passing as gently as they could under M. Gonthier's windows, reached the place, and set to work so busily, that when their minister visited it in the course of the day, he saw, to his surprise, his retreat surrounded by a newly-finished palisade.

My uncle would never have left Ballaigues, had not his health again suffered. His parish was one of those cures in which it is not allowable to engage an assistant. Forced, therefore,

* Resting-places.

to change, he now applied for the situation of pastor, and was again appointed to a village in the mountains. He came to St. Cergues, his health in a much worse state than when he had first arrived at Ballaigues two years before. He had been far from insensible to the sudden loneliness of his life; and the change of climate and habit seriously affected his whole bodily system. From the natural effect of his situation, whatever subject set him thinking was now too much for his enfeebled state of health; study affected him, for he was too much alone, and meditation, because it was too prolonged. Even his correspondence with his friends fatigued him; perhaps he carried it to too great an extent, for he was in the habit of writing to at least thirty individuals. The climate among the mountains is piercingly cold in the morning and evening, even during the finest weather, and a long winter follows a short but brilliant summer. He could receive no visitors during the winter, and in the summer he had more than his strength could bear. For the few weeks while the warm weather lasted, not only his friends, but strangers flocked to see him. The latter were astonished to find a man of polished manners and a highly educated mind, whose spirit was occupied by the highest subjects, dwelling

in so solitary a place. They heard from his lips peculiarly intelligent opinions as to persons and things, for he preserved in his retreat a remarkable quickness of thought and rich spring of imagination. They could discover no distaste to society in him, nor were they long in discerning that if he loved his solitude, it was because he had been placed there by God and the calling of his ministry. His countenance bore the traces of sorrow and suffering, but a still more striking expression of peaceful resignation. His trials, indeed, had only given a purer character to his remarkable mildness. The remembrance of his own sorrows had never prevented him from taking a lively interest in the happiness of others. Persons have often come to him to speak of their misfortunes, and have quitted him ashamed of the complaints they had uttered, taught by his example to seek for strength from the only real source.

Which of his guests could have thought, when seeing him so attentive to them, so cheerful in conversation, and with a mind so seemingly at ease, that his nights were passed without sleep, and that he was often suffering from acute pain? Who would have guessed that every household care devolved on himself, that he was obliged to send for all provisions

from a distance, and that if he quitted his visitors for a short time, it was to attend to some common household care? On his return to his guests, his conversation was not the less delightful, displaying as it did at one time the faith, the love, the piety with which his soul was filled, and at another time disclosing a depth of serious thought. It was sometimes distinguished by delicate refinement, nay by a charming playfulness; it was always, however, full of easy, graceful kindness towards every one. He loved to accompany his guests about the beautiful environs of St. Cergues, and his observations threw an indescribable charm over every object which presented itself on the way. He was so childlike, that the commonest plant delighted him; and the bluet, or common cornflower, which had been his wife's favourite flower, often brought tears to his eyes. He had an exquisite perception of the beauties of nature; there was not a quiet valley, nor a distant prospect, nor any place however ordinary, which had not some peculiar beauty in his eyes. The presence of his God was never forgotten, and seemed to shed a new and glorious character over every object. He appeared to have an intuitive perception of the exquisite harmony subsisting between the worlds

of nature and grace, and of the extraordinary adaptation of the things which God had made to the persons for whose use they were created. He had thus learned from his Saviour to describe the things of heaven by the types and parables of visible and earthly things. No one could ever leave him without feeling his spirit elevated, and his mind opened to many new impressions, but I may also add, not without a painful sensation of self-reproach. He had spoken perhaps of heaven, as if it had been the first object of your desires—of faith, of purity, of devotedness to God and to your fellow-creatures, without appearing even to doubt that you sought them above all things; and you could not help feeling how blessed you would have been, could your own heart have testified to you that this was true. Perhaps, at the time, you secretly reproached him for not dealing faithfully with you, and speaking plainly to you that truth which it costs us so much to speak to ourselves; while, instead of this, he had only read your heart by his own. The general effect, however, of intercourse with him, was to leave the mind deeply impressed, serious, and thoughtful, and in this frame of feelings you descended from the mountain. He, however, returned to his solitary life,—returned to it with his vivid remembrance of the

past, with his constant bodily sufferings, and with all those refined thoughts and feelings which he had the power of expressing in so singularly delightful a manner, but which he was often constrained to shut up within himself; and this most likely would be the case at the commencement of winter. Ah, we had need to repeat to ourselves that his heavenly Father was with him, that his God and his beloved parish still remained to him. We prayed that God would graciously sustain him, for we could not conceal from ourselves the fact, that to the happy and cheerful, though fatiguing days just passed, long hours of acute suffering were to succeed. Dearly would he pay for every effort he had made, by weeks of sleepless nights, of pain, and of exhaustion.

It was during one of these periods that he was called to the performance of a painful office, which appeared for the time to restore him to his former strength. His mother, and shortly afterwards his father, required his attendance at their death-beds. He seemed to revive, in order to fulfil this pious duty. I have seen him, with his eyes fixed on his beloved parents, watch their slightest movements or their feeblest signs, guess the wants they were too weak to express, bend down to them, and try to speak in a

slow, distinct, but very gentle voice; smiling on them when his strength was hardly equal to it; showing the most unalterable sweetness; ever ready to wait upon them, and to do so quietly and calmly, allowing himself neither rest nor relaxation. If it was insisted upon that he should absent himself from them for a short time, he was soon again at his post. His father's last words were, "O my dear, my dear son!" Until his father died, and even to the day when we committed the remains of this revered parent to the ground, and his spirit returned to God who gave it, my uncle's strength did not fail. Before he left us, he was enabled to address a few words to us. They were as follow:

"If there is a time when the voice of God more expressly speaks to us, it is at such a season as the present. We have ourselves been able to judge, by the most affecting example, and one well calculated to make a deep impression upon our hearts, what true christianity is. We have seen the blessed peacefulness it can give in sickness and in death. We ought more than ever to feel how true it is that there is but one thing needful. We must seek to make this heavenly and consoling faith our own, and not satisfy ourselves with merely assenting to the

truth of it; we must give ourselves up, without any reservation, to the full conviction of it, and firmly resolve, God helping us, to bring every thought, word, and action into agreement with its precepts. In thus following the footsteps of our honoured father, whom God, in His mercy, gave us as a guide, there will still remain a link between us which death cannot sever. And whenever we have been enabled to overcome our inward frailty, and to feel ourselves brought nearer to our God and Saviour, we may imagine we hear our beloved father's voice speaking to us, and saying, 'Take courage, my children, relax not in your zeal and your ardour. Ah! if you knew, as I now do, what a glorious recompence of reward awaits those who faint not—could I unveil before your eyes the mysteries of everlasting happiness, you could then have but this one engrossing object, to fight the good fight of faith, and to press forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and to obtain that eternal inheritance bought for us by our blessed Saviour with his own most precious blood, and which we may inherit together one day, you and myself, your dear mother, and all the beloved and happy spirits who are gone before you!'"

My uncle parted with us to return to St.

Cergues, where he arrived, worn out with fatigue, and broken down by this new affliction. His health never recovered this new shock. The few months he still remained among the mountains were passed in weakness and in pain. Very frequently, in the morning, when he rose at his accustomed hour, which was five o'clock, he had not enjoyed any sleep during the whole night. The fever which consumed him acquired strength when he was left alone, and yet was increased by the excitement of conversation. His weakness was so great that he was often obliged to pause and sit down while preaching, to regain a little strength before he could proceed. After the service was ended, it was with great difficulty, though leaning on his friend M. Gudet, that he could walk the short distance which separated the church from his house; and when he reached it, he would throw himself breathless on the first chair which was offered to him. There remained nothing therefore for him but again to leave his parish; and though it would be a new trial to do so, it was quite necessary for him to come down to the more genial climate of the plain. His friends, knowing the state he was in, urged him to leave St. Cergues; and one of them, who was his godfather, insisted with the authority of a father on his removal. He

thought it right to yield; and after having remained three years in his second mountain parish, he took up his abode at Rolle, as first pastor of that town.

M. Gonthier settled at Rolle just at the time of an important crisis to the Swiss churches. As the eventful period of the French revolution was drawing towards its close, those who were accustomed to study the philosophy of history predicted the approach of an epoch of order, peace, and religion, and what they had foreseen soon began to appear. From the commencement of the nineteenth century increased attention was excited to religion. At the restoration of the Bourbons there was hardly a country of Europe in which some commotion did not show itself, having religion for its object, or at least for its pretext. There seemed to be a revival of religion, both among the papists and the protestants. This returning again to the ancient faith was looked upon by all as an awakening; and, in fact, many of the primitive doctrines of salvation were again received by nations and by individuals. But, as is always the case, the crisis was attended by some flights of fanaticism. Political parties took advantage of the excited state of the public mind, to turn it to their own ends. Switzerland

took her share in these various manifestations, and the canton de Vaud became the theatre of events, at once the most interesting and the most deserving of attention. Either from indolence and the attachment of the people to their ancient customs, or from the especial favour of God, the Vaudois church had departed less than others from the doctrines of the reformation. But it was too true that the blessed effects of these holy doctrines were but feebly exhibited in the lives of the people. There was now, however, a sudden revival of religion among the ministers of the church, principally among the younger men. But with the glorious spirit of the true faith was sometimes seen the indiscreet and inflated opinions of distempered imaginations. The consciences of many men were troubled; a spirit of uneasiness and inquiry seemed at once to seize on whole families; old habits were disturbed among the people, and their long, drowsy repose was at once broken up.

Such was the state of society when M. Gonthier arrived at Rolle, in the November of 1818, and his situation there gave him considerable influence over the progress of this religious awakening. He soon made up his mind how to act. Firmly persuaded that the cause of religion

was to be the grand object of interest in the nineteenth century, he looked upon those who first appeared on the scene rather as pioneers, and, if I may say so, as soldiers who had lost their way in this great and holy enterprize. Their errors neither astonished nor troubled him. Many among them, in enumerating the few faithful among their countrymen, purposely avoided reckoning him among the number. He felt neither offended nor irritated at this treatment. He was contented, as to what regarded him personally, to appeal to the judgment of God from that of men; and as to what concerned the church, to feel satisfied that it was in higher keeping. He did, however, grieve deeply to see the spirit of persecution appear in his country, which could only tend to irritate wounds already made, widen the breach between opposing parties, and afford the sad prospect of a termination at once deplorable and fatal. The report of all this, which had spread even to other countries, filled him with the deepest sorrow. He always tried to turn the conversation away from such subjects. He eagerly seized the first opportunity which presented itself to protest against the spirit of intolerance, nor did he suffer one day to pass, as long as these disturbances lasted, without offering up the most fervent prayers to

God, that He would look with favour upon the church, and with mercy upon its persecutors.

He did not, however, rest here. He judged that, as a christian, and as a member of the church, present circumstances imposed new duties upon him. As a christian, he felt called upon to consider attentively the new doctrines which were brought forward, to weigh them well, and to reject nothing which he thought was of God. In more than one respect this was of service to him; for he thus acquired clearer views, and learned to express himself more decidedly, and more in accordance with the simplicity of the gospel. He got rid of some mistaken notions which savoured of legality; and while he ceased not to teach, that without holiness none could enter heaven, he now preached more plainly salvation as the free gift of God; the natural corruption of the human heart; the necessity of regeneration, and the inestimable love of God in sending His Son Jesus Christ into the world to save sinners. As a member of the church, and as a pastor in it, he saw that his duty required that he should examine his conscience, and consult, not only his own experience, but the word of God, and the records of history, that he might be taught more distinctly what were his duties in this eventful period. The result of this

inquiry was the settled persuasion that his place was in the bosom of a national church, and in that one where he now ministered. He had no longer a doubt or a hesitation on this point, but felt as firmly convinced of it as he was of the duty of strengthening every day the bond of charity towards all men, and that of brotherly love towards every child of God. He thought, however, that the eventful character of the times required in every minister of the national church a renewed spirit of earnestness and of zeal, as well as that wisdom and that ceaseless activity which are indispensable as proofs of spiritual progress in our heavenward course, even in the lowly path of christian perseverance.

Such were the opinions of M. Gonthier, and, as was ever the case with him, his actions soon plainly showed their agreement with them. His brethren in the ministry can bear testimony to his assiduity in attending the conferences and conventions. He has come among them even to the last years of his life, and sometimes when he appeared almost too weak to move without exertion. They know the deserved veneration in which he was held there, the weight that was attached to every word he said, and how his very presence brought with it a spirit of peace among those of different ages and of opposite

opinions. On the other hand, his parish was witness to the renewed zeal with which he fulfilled all his ministerial duties. His preaching became still more winning and persuasive. He laboured more than he had ever done, and his debilitated state was forgotten, while his whole heart was given up to the one object for which he lived. He might have been thought young and full of vigour, had not these renewed exertions been soon followed by a fit of illness, so violent that it was feared it must end in death. He was obliged at once to commit the care of his parish to a suffragan minister.

He did recover this attack, however, and the raging fever, after a long continuance, at last abated. It assumed a chronic form, but threatened to resume its violent inflammable character on the slightest exertion or fatigue. Weeks and months passed away, and the beloved invalid experienced no amelioration in his state of health. For one of his ardent and active mind to feel himself suddenly stopped in the labours of his ministry, was a trial of a new character from those he had before met with. He saw at once that he could never hope to undertake again the charge of the church of Rolle, which embraces an extensive field of duty. Was he then to do nothing, but drag on a useless ex-

istence? Was his course ended? Or what was the will of his Lord concerning him? While he was thus perplexed within himself, and looking forward with some little anxiety to the future, an appointment unexpectedly became vacant in a neighbouring parish, inferior in rank and in stipend, but where there was but little labour required. The office of deacon at Nyon required, in the person who held it, little more than to preach on the Sunday. The thought that perhaps strength sufficient would be granted to him to enable him to perform the light duties required in such a sphere, made his heart leap with joy, and he decided upon making the trial. To the great astonishment of many, he applied for the vacant appointment; and giving up, with deep regret, the charge of his beloved flock at Rolle, after labouring three years among them, he came, at the end of his pilgrimage, to take up his abode at Nyon.*

But here also was he disappointed in his hopes. A few attempts which he made to preach, though with long intervals between, brought him again almost to the gates of death. They left him in such a state of convulsed excitement, and which lasted so long, that it was feared another attempt would affect his reason, if not

* The native place of Fletcher of Madeley.

altogether destroy the powers of his mind. His heart was now severely tried. He was for the first time almost desponding. I had been just appointed as his assistant in the ministry, and, with my eldest sister, had taken up my abode with him. We saw the struggles of his mind. Had it not been for the hope of being useful to me, I have no doubt that he would at once have given up the office of pastor altogether. His affection for us, and the benefits he hoped to confer upon us, appeared to become, in some measure, the means of comforting him. From the first moment of my sister's arrival, his chief study seemed to be how he might make her happy. His thoughts were constantly occupied about her. She was beginning to replace his own lost child in his affections. She had come, thinking to take care of and attend upon him; but she herself received from him every care and attention. On those days when he knew me to be particularly engaged, I have seen him, though very ill, rise from his bed, and, supporting himself against the wall as he walked along, come and sit with my sister, and do all in his power to please and interest her. He liked to be with her as much as he could. They were always happy when together; and this mutual affection appeared to increase every day. This

lasted rather more than six months, when it pleased the Lord to remove my beloved sister from among us. God, in his goodness, had, I feel assured, brought her to her uncle that he might be made the instrument of preparing her for another world.

My sister Marie was about twenty-one when she died. No words can describe our feelings on this occasion; and our dear uncle—how did he bear up under this fresh bereavement! The blow left him without strength, at least he found none in himself; but God was merciful to him, and upheld him; and he imparted to us some of that heavenly comfort wherewith he himself had been comforted. He felt so firmly persuaded that without the permission of our heavenly Father not a sparrow falleth to the ground, that at once he bowed himself under the hand of God, repelled every thought that might seem like a murmur, and taught us to reap with him the blessed fruits of affliction. With what warmth did he afterwards talk to us of the firm hope which was as an anchor to his soul. I remember some of his expressions: “Our sweet child is now in heaven. She has received a crown of life; nor can the heart of man conceive the happiness she now enjoys. It is in that blessed place I strive to seek her every hour, though my weak

heart is always longing to recall her, and brings to my remembrance the past with its happiness, and the future, once so bright, with its cheering hopes. And Thou, O Lord! pardon this selfishness, and grant that I may not love myself so much, but that my love for her may become more disinterested, while I aspire to that blessed place where Thou, in Thy wisdom and great mercy, hast removed her. This preparation of mind can only come from Thee; but Thou wilt bestow it on those who faint not in seeking after Thee, for the sake of Him by whom alone we can have access to Thee, even Jesus Christ our Saviour. He will give His peace, which the world cannot give, to those who are weary and heavy laden, and who come to Him for peace and rest."

Our dear father thus tried to comfort us, and yet we were well aware how much he himself needed comfort. Seeing the state of his health, and the severe shock it had again received, we all entreated him to leave home on a tour for some time, as travelling had always seemed the only remedy from which he derived any benefit. He had for some preceding years taken several journeys through Switzerland and France, and always returned much improved in health. The south of France had a peculiar attraction to

him. As soon as he arrived in Provence, his bodily feelings underwent a complete change, his nervous irritation was soothed, and he became as one inspired with new life. He was like some withered fruit in the hands of a skilful chemist, who, by means of his air-pump, gives it for a short time the appearance and freshness of its former state. The warm and balmy atmosphere, the variety and novelty of every thing, as well as the life and animation of the scene, had the same effect upon him. The rapid communication of thoughts and feelings were well suited to his own. They formed, indeed, a strong contrast to our national slowness, and made him enjoy, almost as a kind of repose, the easy flow of French conversation. However, he was now under painful restrictions. He was in a state of such extreme weakness, that he could rarely take an active part in conversation; and the doctors whom he had consulted had positively insisted on his avoiding every occasion of excitement. He was in consequence obliged to pass very near to some of his most valued friends, without venturing to see them. At Lyons, however, he could not deny himself the melancholy pleasure of lodging at the same hotel to which he had formerly gone in company with his wife and child. The hostess

knew him again. Seeing him alone, and so aged in appearance, with tears in her eyes, and without speaking, or waiting for him to speak to her, she led him to the same room in which his child had formerly been taken ill, and where he had attended her for a fortnight with the most unremitting and tender care. His heart longed to visit Nîmes, for his dearest friends were there, and there also were those two graves which he had so often visited, not to weep, but to pray that he might be strengthened in his godly resolutions. However, he obeyed the orders of his physician, which forbade his approach to a spot where his deepest feelings would have been awakened. He went the oftener to Marseille, and to the Isles of Hyères. Once he embarked on the canal of Languedoc, visited Bordeaux, La Rochelle, crossed La Vendée, and, following the course of the Loire, returned through Paris, where he remained a few days. Finding, however, that he did not regain the strength which was expected from this lengthened excursion, he latterly confined his journeys to the departments of Est, and to Provence. We, however, must not think of him in these journeys as unlike his former self. For in the diligence, in the hotel, and in his solitary rambles, he was ever the same devoted follower of

Christ; occupied with one glorious subject, the effect of which was always visible in his life and conversation. Many accounts have reached us of the good he did, and of the blessings he scattered around him on these journeys. Much, doubtless, still remains unknown. He never stayed at any place without leaving a lasting impression in the hearts of the persons he met. They could not forget his touching expression of countenance, his heavenly serenity, his conversation, full of animation and of an interest rarely to be met with, sometimes sparkling with wit and gracefulness, but more frequently glowing with the ardour of christian love. When he departed, none felt as if a stranger had been among them. Once he was seen to arrive at his accustomed hotel at Geneva, accompanied by several other travellers, who all appeared to regard him with deep interest. When he returned home to us, he thought that the account of his acquaintance with them might be useful to us. "I was sitting in silence, according to orders," he said, "when a remark was made by one of our fellow-travellers, which turned the conversation to the subject of religion. It then appeared that there were in the diligence persons holding many shades of opinion, from scepticism to true faith. Among them was a

very well informed and agreeable man, who spoke of religion with respect, but seemed to think it a blessing which was, and most probably ever would be unknown to him. I could no longer forbear joining in the conversation, but spoke as knowing by my own experience the truth of what I advanced. The conversation continued between us, he bringing to it his brilliant wit, and the stores of a rich and fertile imagination, while I spoke from my heart, from my own conviction, and with my whole soul. Wearied at last by a combat in which we engaged with such unequal weapons, touched also by his noble and generous manner, and sometimes by a tone which appeared to come from his heart, I could not help saying, from the very depths of my own heart, ‘Ah, Sir! you will think me strange and hard-hearted, but I cannot help praying that you may one day meet with a heavy affliction!’ The expression of my own care-worn countenance showed plainly enough that I had myself experienced those trials which I desired might one day be his; perhaps, also, my deep feeling was perceptible in the very tones of my voice. There was a dead silence for some minutes, and each of us appeared to be absorbed in thought. When we resumed the conversation, it was with more seriousness. The man who

had before taken the lead still continued to converse with a lively interest, but with less levity; he seemed to be less impressed with the importance of his own opinions, more humble, and now spoke from his heart. All of them, and he especially, treated me with a degree of interest and affection which continued to increase during the remainder of our journey. On arriving at Geneva, we did not separate. They all agreed to accompany me to that hotel where I am accustomed to stay. They begged that we might form one party at the same table. I have since received several letters, full of interest, from the man whom I had thus permitted to look into the secret state of my heart. And from what then occurred I have learned this lesson—Not to be so fearful, so distrustful, as we often are, in speaking of those convictions which bring with them the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Another consequence of the journeys of M. Gonthier ought also here to be mentioned. He had always been in the habit of reading much, and rapidly, books of every description. Even during the time of his active ministry at Nîmes, he had found means to keep pace with the literature of the day. He took advantage of the various situations in which his travelling

life now placed him, to study mankind as a social body, under the various aspects in which he met them. He not only read the books and newspapers published in the capital, but sought out carefully provincial publications, and made himself well acquainted with their peculiar character. Literature on the subject of religion was, however, the chief object of his attention. He collected together and read the writings of opposite parties, and in doing so, he was accustomed to make extracts of what appeared most striking to him. "In travelling for the re-establishment of my health," he wrote to us, "I must not lose sight of that which is of infinitely higher importance. Too often deprived of the blessings of public worship, or absent from those places where I might enjoy really edifying conversation, I try at least to collect around me the best books I may happen to meet with. I extract from them what I think may be useful, without always employing the author's expressions, but modifying them occasionally, that I may give them a personal application to myself." While thus employed, a thought struck him, which at first he rejected, but which, gradually sinking deeper and deeper into his mind, at last prevailed with him. It was to collect these scattered fragments, and to

arrange them, in order to present them as an entire work to the public. He did not adopt this plan without extreme self-distrust. As a young man he had advanced a few steps in the paths of literature, and had published, while at Yverdon, "*Mélanges de Littérature et de Morale*," sketches full of grace and feeling. Afterwards, the "*Portefeuille des Enfants*" had appeared by him, written for his own children; and, about the same time, he and one of his dearest friends had brought out together a periodical publication, "*La Voix de la Religion au 19^e Siècle*." In this work the two friends hailed the first symptoms of a return to religion; and in giving an account of the re-establishment of the institutions of the church, they sought to point out the means of restoring life to them. They continued this publication for two years. From that time M. Gonthier had stopped short in a path where vanity, he feared, had led him, and in returning to it he proceeded cautiously. He attempted small works at first, and printed only a few copies. In 1824 appeared his "*Exercices de Piété pour la Communion*." This little book, which was much wanted, soon forced itself into notice. Corrected year after year from its first appearance, in successive editions, it

soon took its place as a standard work. Three other publications appeared the same year from his pen, and had likewise a great run: they were, “*Un Coup-d’œil Religieux sur les Ouvrages de la Création* ;” “*Lettres choisies de Fénelon* ;” and “*Lectures Chrésiennes*.” This last consisted of three parts—Short Meditations ; Reflections on the Sufferings of Christ ; and an abridgment of the Confessions of St. Augustine. He was soon called upon to reprint these works.

The course which he had thus tried now appeared to him to be his appointed path. He began to see what was the will of God concerning him. His heavenly Father, in His infinite goodness, called him to a work full of pleasantness, and proportioned to his weakness. He could not, it is true, devote himself to it as he might have done in his former days of health, when he wrote with a facility rarely equalled. Now he was soon exhausted. He was frequently obliged to leave his employment, and return to it again ; to efface very often what he had written, correct it, copy it again and again, striving at the same time against the acute pain in his head, from which every day and every hour he suffered. Worn out as he was, the fever occasioned by composition excited him at the

time, and left him afterwards in a state of debility and irritation of nerves impossible to describe. Still he went on in spite of all, and could not sufficiently bless God, who had, contrary to his expectation, provided for him, in the midst of his loneliness, another kind of pulpit and ministry. He received strength to fulfil his new vocation. Year after year he saw it extend itself. During the eight years of his life which he passed in writing, twenty-four thousand copies of his works issued from the Geneva press. Few pious families, in a widely-extended circle, are without some of M. Gonthier's works.

The publications we have already mentioned contained the germ of his more extensive writings. In the Confessions of St. Augustine was contained that of "La Petite Bibliothèque des Pères de l'Eglise;" that of "Collection de Lettres Chrétiennes," in "Choix de Lettres de Fénelon;" and in his "Méditations" was the germ of "Mélanges Evangéliques." He introduced into the "Mélanges" the extracts which he had made during his several journeys, as well as the fragments in which the fruits of his own meditations were incorporated, and also some reflections which his own experience, the study of his own heart,

and of the Holy Scriptures, had suggested to him. Thus these three volumes were compiled, and entitled, “*Considérations;*” “*Méditations Chrésiennes;*” and “*Remarques sur quelques Passages du Nouveau Testament.*” We hope soon to add to this collection a fourth volume, which was nearly completed when we lost our uncle: it is called, “*Reflexions sur la Passion de notre Seigneur Jésus Christ.*”

The second collection published by M. Gonthier was, “*Lettres Chrétiennes.*” It was a happy idea to let the fathers of the church,—popes, obscure believers, martyrs of different sects, reformers, members of port-royal, as well as those belonging to the order of the jesuits, missionaries of divers communions,—all successively speak the common language of the christian faith. There was unity, and yet variety, in the work—variety of situation, of character, and of information. These letters, written from different places, and at such different periods, were likely to have an interest with many kinds of readers; and they did, in consequence, obtain a speedy and welcome reception. Encouraged by their success, M. Gonthier tried, in every new edition, to perfect and enlarge the work, till in the last it was increased to five

volumes. The first contains letters written before the eighteenth century. The second, those of Fenelon. The third volume, which contains Duguet's letters, caused some trouble in the collecting. The writings of this pious jansenist were difficult to be met with. It happened, however, that the book lay forgotten on the shelves of a bookseller, who was one of his congregation; it was unknown to the man himself, or perhaps he might have scrupled to harbour the work of one belonging to a hostile sect; however, it was to be had for gold; and M. Gonthier, happy in the possession of his treasure, set to work to extract from it materials for the third volume of his collection. The fourth volume comprises letters written during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The fifth is for the use of persons in affliction. He who had suffered much himself, was well calculated to make such a selection. We wish to add to these five volumes a sixth, composed entirely of our uncle's own letters: there are many of them in the possession of his friends. He also wrote many to persons who, after reading his works, had asked his advice in situations of difficulty. Doubtless there would be many things in such a correspondence which ought to remain secret; but there must be others admirably fitted to become

a common benefit. May we be allowed to solicit copies or fragments of those letters which, by being made public, might be useful to others? We claim this favour from the kindness and courtesy of those persons from whom we ask it; and we hope, from what we may thus receive, to find materials for a sixth and last volume of “*Lettres Chrésiennes*.”

M. Gonthier’s last work was his “*Petite Bibliothèque des Pères de l’Eglise*.” It had long been a subject of regret to him, that the ancient fathers of the church, who are almost worshipped by the papists, should be altogether neglected by protestants. These holy fathers, formerly so very powerful—for nations had been converted through their instrumentality—had surely not become utterly unworthy of the study of men of the present age. Every thing in the present day announces an awakening. It is a sign of a revival in the church, when a deep interest is felt in the records of her ancient days; indeed there never is a real awakening without this. The church renovates herself by returning to the contemplation of her saints and martyrs; and in this manner retraces her steps to her divine source, to draw afresh its pure and living waters. Such researches have already commenced. In England, in Germany,

and in France, we have seen the fathers of the church furnish matter for many a laborious undertaking. We have even seen them offered to the astonished eyes of persons in the drawing-rooms of the capital, by the most elegant of our literary men.* M. Gonthier approached these subjects with a serious and thoughtful mind. During his long winters at St. Cergues, their writings formed his habitual studies, and he then began to make extracts from them. In his various journeys, he sought to form a collection of their works; and profiting by the dispersion of the monastic libraries which took place at the revolution, and filled the booksellers' shops with their contents, he succeeded in making it complete. He then applied himself to accomplish his last and crowning work. It was performed in the spirit which always animated him. He thought less of making it an historical work than an edifying one. From the lives and writings of the fathers, he chose out that which appeared to him to possess an interest, at once the most pure, the most extensive, and at the same time of the most abiding service to the church. He occasionally introduced into the narrative some of the thoughts

* M. Villemain, of the French Academy, in his work entitled, "*Nouveaux Mélanges.*"

of his own heart, and the reflections drawn from his own experience. In the translation, he united simplicity with his own natural elegance. Sometimes a passage which had been translated twenty times before, appeared new from him. As his health declined, study became more and more irksome to him, and he was obliged to revise, over and over again, what he had written. A letter to any one of his family has taken him several days to write, and many pages in "*La Bibliothèque*" have been re-written ten times before sent to the press. These volumes, produced so slowly, would have been completed with difficulty, if the lonely and retired life he led had not afforded him so many long days, and if he had not acquired the habit of improving every moment. And thus, in the midst of pain and suffering, he persevered in the task set before him, for which indeed he seemed to live, but which he was not spared to finish.

It is a mistake, in taking an account of the years of our life, to reckon the troubled and the untroubled together, for our years may be weighed as well as measured; and how heavy are some of them with the burden of our sufferings! Sorrow and labour had made our uncle an old man at fifty, except in spirit and in heart. To see him, or to hear him speak,

one would have thought him still young, because, while conversation lasted, the fervour of his spirit animated his heart, his looks, and his manner. His inward fever, alas ! assumed the appearance of the vigour of life, but failed not, at the same time, slowly to wear away the poor sufferer, who for some time was able to oppose to it his strong constitution, his temperance, and his regularity of diet. His doctor was his housekeeper Fanchette, who knew exactly how to adapt his food to his state of health at the time, and to combine that which was nourishing and strengthening, in his daily repast, with some ingredient of a soothing nature. Kind, good Fanchette, your devotion to our uncle has indeed spared him much suffering, and been the means of prolonging his existence. It has added to the hours which he was thus enabled to dedicate to God, and to the service of his fellow-creatures. You understood him perfectly ; you guessed his wants ; you have been his hand and foot to him, when he could no longer himself visit those in sickness and affliction. We have seen you always the same towards him, during the nine years you served him. Together with us you closed his eyes. If any one has loved M. Gonthier, or has been benefited by him, let them bless you,

as we do. Yes, you have done what you could !

Alas ! we could not prevent our beloved invalid from feeling the change of seasons. When winter came, he remained for weeks together, trembling both with cold and fever, under the *duvets* * with which he was covered, with no respite, no sleep, and obliged to forbid himself all communication with us, as the slightest exertion would have increased the violence of the disease. How many days has he thus passed ! How often has he reckoned the hours of the night by those of his sufferings ! And when the morning dawned, when every thing awakes refreshed by the night's repose, it was with difficulty he could lift up his languid head. If he hailed the returning day, it brought not to him, as it did to others, the society of children, of a wife, of friends, of recreations, of joys, to lighten his labours. His days were He alone knew what they were ! We have known nothing of them but what it was not possible for him to conceal. Ever ready to open his heart to us on the subject of his blessings, he kept to himself the secret of his sufferings. How did he try to spare our feelings ! He prayed, he

* Coverlids, filled with down, and commonly used in some parts of the continent.

trusted in God, he cast himself upon Him, and waited patiently for happier hours, assured that they would come at last. And they often came to him, even in the midst of his severest agonies. The God of all comfort alone knows the secret and ineffable sweetness which he was enabled to taste through faith, even in his seasons of heaviest suffering. My uncle, on more than one occasion, has gratefully borne witness to this. Once we found him, though we knew he was very ill on that day, with that expression of happiness in his face, which was indeed habitual to him, and we could not help alluding to that which struck us so sensibly. "It is true," he said, "that often on those days in which my physical anguish is the greatest and the most protracted, and when I feel most worn out and cast down, that I am permitted at the same time to experience in the highest degree those joys which the peace of God imparts. I feel distinctly, at such times, my double existence,—that of the body, which suffers; and that of the spirit, which remains calm, comforted, and happy."

While this state of severe suffering lasted, M. Gonthier could not apply himself to any kind of study. It was always succeeded by days of languor and extreme debility, from

which a journey generally relieved him. The strength he then acquired he hastened to devote to the composition of his works, to writing letters, and, when he was able, to paying his visits, particularly among the afflicted. His days were passed in this manner, when a petition was sent to him by my mother and my only remaining sister, who lived together near Yverdun. Since the death of my eldest sister, my uncle had given all the affection which he had before divided between his two nieces, to my sister Anna. She reminded him of his mother. Her gentleness had a peculiar charm to him. He had, but a short time before, united her in marriage to a young minister of the gospel, who was endeared to us from our childhood; and now they entreated that he would come to them, and be a witness of their happiness. He answered the letter by saying: "My Anna, my own beloved child, I cannot tell you how much I feel at the thought of once more embracing you, nay, of finding myself under your roof. Yet you know how much I dread lest a visit from me should prove a fatigue to my sister, when over-exertion of any kind is hurtful to her. Nor would I interfere in any way with the engagements of our dear Auguste, who must necessarily have much to do at the

present time, when the festivals of our church are so near at hand. Tell me just how things stand. The enjoyments which God has in store for us are always fuller and sweeter when in seeking them we have not only consulted the wishes of our hearts, but the dictates of reason also. I shall still look forward to this delightful journey, the mere thought of which already makes my heart throb with pleasure."

There was but one voice in the parsonage to urge our uncle to hasten his journey. Anna, full of happiness, wrote the letter to entreat him to come. The day she wrote she was full of life, and appeared to be in the enjoyment of excellent health. Ah, who could have thought that she was calling her father to attend her deathbed, and that a week afterwards she would breathe her last in his arms!

Hadst thou yet any tears left, kind, suffering, sympathizing friend? My own mother! my more than father! how anxiously did we—my brother and myself—desire to show you not only the affection of a son, but to replace the gentle daughter whom you had lost! Dearest mother, so heavily afflicted, while leaning upon us, you turned at the same time to your brother! and he was enabled to console and support you. Like that heavenly Friend from

whom alone he derived his strength, he did not fail you. Words of comfort were still given to him for your sake. He was enabled to comfort you in your trouble, by the comfort wherewith he himself was comforted of God.

He wrote thus to our dearest mother, a few days after the death of Anna :

“ My beloved sister, dearer to me than ever : I wish you were able to read my whole heart, that you might see how your sorrows are become my sorrows, your life my life, and your future my future. I did not think it possible that any thing could have drawn closer the ties of affection which have united us from our childhood ! It has known no change by any change of circumstances, but has strengthened itself in the midst of the varied events of our lives. The common interest we both felt in your children, whom I look upon as my own, only increased our affection ; and that affection appeared to have obtained a more perfect character from the ever-growing desire of our hearts to live entirely and devotedly to our Divine Saviour ; to Him, by whom alone we can hope to enter together the blessed and eternal mansions of heaven. And yet, when I think of that inexhaustible flow of affection which your Anna felt for you, from

which you were permitted to draw at all times, and in the blessing of which no one ever rejoiced more than myself, I feel how great a call there is upon those still left, to make up to you for what you have lost. But I know, and I feel so much delight in saying it—nay, I cannot repeat it with expressions of sufficient strength—that your loving and dutiful children yearn towards you with a far more anxious and affectionate tenderness than they have ever felt. They would surround you with a more lively and devoted love. Indeed, no words of mine can interpret the language of their hearts towards you. But permit your brother also, identified as he is with you, he who alone remains to you in the place of your revered father and your tenderest of mothers—permit him to tell you, being thus the representative, in some sort, of the lively affection of our parents towards you, that he would have you regard him also as the representative of your Anna, of her whose affection was your joy upon earth; your joy, and mine as well as yours. You cannot conceive how powerfully I feel my heart drawn towards you. We know, however, in whom alone it is sweet, it is blessed, to love one another: we know Him, who alone can bear us away in

spirit from the storms of this life to the enjoyment of that peace which passeth all understanding, to the magnificent beatitudes of heaven. We will pray to Him to sanctify our close affection, to reveal Himself to our hearts, and to take up His abode within us. And let us never be weary in earnestly entreating and interceding for each other, that He will send to both of us the light, the wisdom, and the strength of His Holy Spirit, to dispel our natural darkness, and to banish the ill-regulated thoughts of our minds, that He will turn us from the seduction of outward things, so that He may truly abide in us, and we in Him, through His great mercy—mercy which is so boundless, that the praise of it will be sung by the choirs of the blessed in heaven to all eternity, so inexhaustible is the glorious theme !”

A short time after the death of my sister Anna, we lost an aunt, a sister of our grandmother. Her residence was at Yverdon, and she was very old and infirm. As long as she lived, my mother would not consent to leave her. After her death, however, we were enabled to realize the wish of our hearts, which had long been to live all together near my uncle. My health no longer allowed me to continue as his suffragan. My brother replaced

me, and my mother took up her abode with us. To describe how her brother prized her dear society, how he devoted himself to her, and what he was to us, would be to present him under a new aspect. But it is time we should stop. We have already entered too minutely into family details, to which your attachment for M. Gonthier could alone impart interest. Little need be said concerning our mother and our uncle. A few words will suffice to show in what light they stood the one to the other. They strove to anticipate each other in their mutual wishes, and their every wish, their grand and ruling principle and motive was, to be conformed in every thing to the will of God. The only strife between them was, who should excel in kindness. They could not recollect an instance, in the whole course of their lives, when a word of difference had been interchanged by them. There was such a strong sympathy between them, that as long as my mother was spared to us, my uncle was tremblingly alive to every change even in the state of her health. It was her last illness which brought him to his lowest degree of weakness, in the month of March, 1832. For many weeks they had not been able to see each other. On the 13th of that month, in the morning, my mother

appeared so fearfully weak, that we could no longer bear to put off informing my uncle of her state, and of our fears that she could not live through the day. On hearing this, he rose, attempted to walk a few steps, then a few more : at length, supporting himself partly on his stick and on my arm, he succeeded in reaching my mother's apartment. On seeing him, she was just enabled to exclaim, "My brother !" and joy seemed at once to take away the little life that remained. He knelt down by her bedside, and bending close to her ear, he prayed. When he had finished, she thanked him by a sign, then closed her eyes, and opened them once more : it was her last effort. We turned our eyes from her beloved form, as if following with our upward looks the spirit which had already ascended to the paradise of God !

I could not attempt to describe the state of my uncle at this moment, or for several days afterwards. He folded us both closely to his heart, and while he was sustained by our arms, he poured out his soul before God in fervent prayer. Then, still supported by us, he walked back to his own parsonage, which he reached with great difficulty. When he attempted to sit down, the rush of blood to his head and heart nearly suffocated him. He was obliged

to rise at once, and tried to move about his room with a gentle and regular step. But the violence of his palpitations would not allow of this, and he was forced to walk up and down the chamber at a rapid pace. These pulsations in his head continued to be so violent, that he felt every instant as if it were about to burst. At the expiration of an hour or two, he again attempted to sit down, but the effort was made in vain, nor was he able to do so during the rest of that day and night, or for the two days and nights which followed. It was only on the third day that extreme fatigue brought him a short season of repose. We shall afterwards mention on what occasion my uncle described to us the agonized feelings of these three days. For two years he never alluded to the subject. His palpitations continued without much intermission for another fortnight, and with such violence, that although we knew but in part what he suffered, we feared that every hour might be his last. In this state, could we dare hope that he would summon resolution sufficient to enter a carriage and take a journey? or, if he would, how could we bear to see him go, knowing how impossible it would be to prevail upon him to allow one of us to accompany him. He did make up his mind to set out. He wrote to us

from Geneva, to tell us he had been enabled to bear the journey so far. He wrote again from Bellegarde, to say that his palpitations were less violent. At Lyons he consulted his physician, who could only repeat his former advice: "Continue your journeys," he said; "work in your garden; employ your thoughts as little as possible; avoid conversation where you cannot help giving way to your natural ardour; and, above all things, shun the least excitement." This was just ordering him to do what he naturally dreaded, but it was wise counsel; he felt it to be so, and he recognised the will of God in it. He therefore determined to follow it implicitly, except when a higher duty called upon him to neglect it. He at once attempted to extend his tour. These journeys were never undertaken from his own inclination. "God is my witness," he said, "that I never set out on one of them for my own satisfaction, and that the chief end I had in view was to render myself, if possible, less unfit to promote the advancement of his kingdom." The necessity of his journey on the present occasion, isolated as he felt himself, and so very ill, was peculiarly painful to him. But God softened it for him, though He did not see fit that he should derive any great accession of strength from it.

The blow that had just struck him had been too violent. He no longer outstepped the narrow circle which had now been marked out as the limits of exertion to him. The least attempt to do so threw him into a state similar to that which he had experienced during those three days,—a period to which he looked back with terror. He thus spent the two years he lived after my mother's death. All the restrictions he submitted to, and all the repose he sought, served but just to keep him from the dreadful malady into which he must otherwise have sunk. They afforded him also a short season for study, and allowed him to devote some small portion of his time to his family. His thoughts, however, were extensively occupied by a variety of other objects dear to his heart. It may indeed be said of him, that he never looked with indifference on any thing. He could no longer hold intercourse with society, except through the medium of a correspondence, now become more and more painful to keep up, by the public journals, and what he gleaned while in the society of my brother and myself. But his heart was not less open to all. Now, as in former times, there was nothing in which he did not take an interest. He inquired minutely into all that concerned

our children, their education, our relations, our common friends. More especially did he receive with eagerness, as if it were the food that nourished him, every thing relating to matters of faith and to the spread of the gospel. Those rapidly fleeting moments which we spent with him shed their influence over the rest of the day, and enlightened and purified it. The recollection of them proved as a guide to us, as a safeguard, and a powerful encouragement. If we were in trouble, he lightened us of our load; if we were in any difficult situation, his advice, which was always weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, soon placed us in a safe position. Latterly, it is true, we were obliged to relinquish the delightful habit which we had acquired of consulting him on every occasion. Seeing how absolutely necessary quiet had now become to him, we avoided as much as possible affording him any matter for thought. We were the more careful on this point, because we could not help seeing that his attacks were becoming more frequent, and less excitement than formerly would now bring them on; while, at the same time, the means employed to counteract them were by degrees losing their efficacy.

The last resource that remained to him, by which he was enabled to regain strength, was

working in his garden. It was situated not far from the parsonage, and had been laid out by himself. The ground, consisting of an abrupt declivity, had been cut into terraces, and these were thickly set with trees, so distributed, as to present a great variety, both of situations and aspects, within its small compass. In the whole design, and in the neatness and care exhibited in the smallest details of it, the disposition and taste of M. Gonthier were easily recognised. He showed himself the same here as in his writings, and as in his life. Here also no object was regarded with indifference. Every tree seemed to be in its right place, and had been trained with scrupulous care: each separate plant appeared to have been the peculiar object of his solicitude. Beautiful garden, thou wert indeed a blessed retreat, and at the same time a blessing to our beloved friend! In thy silence and thy shade he found repose, and for a length of time thou didst revive his worn-out, wearied frame! Thou wast of use to him even in his studies, and didst bring thy sweet refreshment to his mind! He seemed for a time to share the calm, unconscious existence of thy plants, and then to come forth reinvigorated in his intellect, with new powers for the work of his ministry! His heart always

seemed to find rest among the fair creations of his God. In every flower he saw a witness of the greatness and goodness of the Most High, and a messenger of Divine mercy. Even now, in visiting this spot, our hearts appear more open than in any other place to the heavenly and consoling influence of the language we so often heard there from his lips. Other reasons, it is true, contribute to render this little spot of ground peculiarly dear to us. It was there our children were accustomed to see their uncle, who was generally too weak to receive them in his own room. On the turf and on the benches of that garden he often played with them, and received their caresses. We also, in those seasons when he felt himself better, were accustomed to come and seat ourselves by his side; and being less fearful at such times to disturb him by our conversation, we have often plied him with our questions, and received his answers; and indeed it was there we learned the little that we know of him from his own lips. Every conversation, all he said, remained deeply impressed on our memories; and thus his garden has become in a manner haunted with sweet and interesting associations. It was in such a spot that we were seated together one bright May morning, when he said to us,

“Nature is indeed beautiful in this place! How sweet are these flowers! What a delightful spring this is! No: true religion never banishes joy; it only sanctifies it. Assuredly God is love!” In another part of the garden, we first informed him of the loss of one of our dearest friends: “My dear children,” he said, “God has attached so much happiness to this life, that we form a habit of earthly enjoyment; and then, when affliction comes, we hardly understand it: but as these blessings are withdrawn one by one, we begin to associate the remembrance of them with our sorrow in losing them, and to find affliction more natural to us; we learn to dread it less, and to receive it with a consciousness of the blessings which accompany it.”

It was on this spot that he related to his colleague in the ministry, and to myself, the account of a visit he had received, I believe after one of his sermons, from an adulteress, who had become a sincere penitent. He described to us the grief of the wretched woman, who could at first express herself only by her tears, which flowed without ceasing. He told us how God had taught him to raise up this poor penitent; what deep repentance she showed; the sorrow with which she still continued to be bowed

down; and the entire change which took place in her conduct, and in the whole course of her life. "This change was so great," he continued, "that the seducer of the unhappy woman was at last himself touched at witnessing it. There was such a reality in it, so much piety and discretion proceeded from it, that, deeply affected, he at length yielded to the conviction of his grievous offence. He humbled himself before God, and took His yoke upon him. I have known and observed him during many years from that time, and, by the purity of his conduct, he has never ceased to deserve general esteem, and my own particular confidence. He has even become, through the Divine blessing, an instrument of conversion to several others."

Another time, on the very same spot, I repeated to my uncle a circumstance which had happened to myself during a journey I had taken in France. A person with whom I was breakfasting turned to me and said, "Sir, you ought to know at Nyon a minister of the gospel, whom I met with in returning from Marseilles. We were travelling in the same carriage. The party consisted of my brother, (who was a principal of one of those monarchical and religious missions at that time dispersed through the provinces,) the protestant pastor,

and myself. My brother was in all the fervour of his zeal; and seeing himself seated opposite to a man of gentle demeanour and polished manners, he directly became anxious to make a convert of him. He thought he had succeeded, upon hearing that his unknown companion had already attended some of the meetings of the mission, as one to whom the concerns of religion are of the greatest value. My brother was already beginning to address him as one of his own party, when our travelling companion humbly and simply, yet in words which showed much judgment and learning, interrupted him, and pointed out the difference between vital religion and that which he had heard preached by our ministers. My brother was not accustomed to contradiction, and, much surprised, asked, ‘What, then, are you not a roman catholic?’ ‘No, I am not.’ ‘And what, then, are you?’ ‘I am a minister of the reformed church.’ Recovering himself at once, my brother immediately brought forward his arguments against the Reformation. I believe he employed the first which presented themselves to his mind; for the minister answered them easily, and with so much wisdom, ability, and eloquence, that I could not help declaring he had conquered. Nevertheless I said to my brother,

‘Take courage, you must be victorious, for you have truth on your side.’ Upon which he began a fresh attack. But he did not advance an argument which was not answered by his opponent; not a word, to which the other did not reply with calmness, gentleness, and with a singular charm of manner. There was force in his reasons, persuasion in his manner, and something in the very tone of his voice which produced an irresistible effect. In short, I must confess that I was sensibly affected, and so was my brother, and we made up our minds to leave off arguing, and to finish our journey by enjoying the society of the amiable and interesting man with whom we had but a few more hours to remain. We expressed our regrets when the time arrived for us to separate. My brother had quite laid aside his assumed manner, and had shown himself in his natural character. He could not, however, as he was leaving the carriage, help resuming it, and, with a tone of authority, he exhorted our travelling companion to avoid the perdition that awaited him, by placing himself under the shelter of the roman and apostolic church. I think I still see the protestant minister, and hear his answer, and the penetrating tone of his voice, as he said, ‘Ah, Sir, if you did but know the happiness of belonging

entirely to Jesus Christ !' He said no more. We parted, promising ourselves to meet again, should circumstances allow of it. Often since then have I thought of this excellent man. Often and often have I wished to see him again. He has even served me as a buckler of defence against my brother, who with me, as with others, sometimes assumes the same imperious manner as he did on that occasion. At such times I simply bring the reformed minister to his recollection, and propose a journey to Nyon, and this never fails to bring him back to words of gentleness. And now, Sir, be so good as to tell me if you know the person I have been speaking of; and if you do, will you tell me his name, for I have forgotten it?" I pronounced the name of Gonthier, and he at once remembered it. My uncle perfectly recollected the circumstances which I have related, and which I had received from the lips of a stranger, in a place where I should never have supposed it likely for me to learn any thing about him.

Let us descend a few steps lower in this garden, and we shall perceive on the other side an apple tree, belonging to the neighbouring garden. Some children were one day gathering the fruit there, and perceiving M. Gonthier, who was then enjoying his own peaceful medi-

tations, they directly began to sing, with loud voices, the words of a song, in which the "*Momiers*"* were turned into ridicule. In the mean time, some of the fruit had fallen over the paling into M. Gonthier's garden. He pointed this out to them, and in a gentle voice, which it would have been impossible to resist, he begged that they would come round and gather up the fallen apples. They came accordingly, hanging their heads, while he helped them to pick up the fruit, talking kindly to them all the time. They took leave of him, looking very much ashamed; nor from that day do I suppose that he ever again met with any such interruption from them.

A few more words before we leave this garden. We were remarking to him one day, as we sat beside him, that his countenance often deceived those who did not know him well, by its healthy appearance. One of us said, "It is because there is more vigour in the soul than in the body." "So it is thought," he answered, "for so it ought to be. It would seem that he who has suffered much should have learned much; but, alas! I only know that at such trying seasons one feels almost bewildered. But

* A term of derision often bestowed on religious persons in Switzerland.

it is not in the midst of such perplexing conflicts that a right judgment can be formed. We must retire to the silence of our closet: it is there that, alone with our God, we shall see ourselves as we really are, and shall behold nothing but the most wretched weakness."

The time was now fast approaching when my uncle was to leave his garden for the last time. Extreme weakness was now more and more combined with his severe sufferings. The day that he had purchased this garden, Fanchette had expressed her hopes to him that he would long find enjoyment there. "You forget," he answered, "that the day of my death will be the day of highest enjoyment to me." This long wished for day he saw approaching nearer and nearer. He even thought it right to forewarn us of it at the end of the autumn. "My children," he said, "there is a period in our lives when years no longer add to our strength, but are, on the contrary, daily depriving us of it. My garden has given me notice of this. Formerly I was able to dig in it; a few months ago I could still handle a small spade; now I have scarcely strength to stoop to tie up my young shrubs. I have but little strength left, and winter is coming on!"....Winter came, but it was the mild one of 1834. M. Gonthier

appeared less tried by it than he was in general. On new year's day he was still able to receive us all, and to give us his blessing. We hoped much from the return of spring, and from the journey which he might then undertake. The first, however, which he did attempt, decided at once that his strength was entirely gone.

He was taken very ill upon arriving at Geneva. He wished to set out at once on his return home, but having attempted to walk from the inn to the place from whence the carriage started, he found himself unable to do so, and waited till the next day. We saw him return home with his countenance quite changed, and the expression of pain imprinted in every feature. I cannot attempt to describe what we felt. We understood each other's looks; we foresaw that now the day of our separation in this world could not be very far off. He folded us in his arms, and said, "There are two things, my beloved children, which I can never express as deeply as I feel them: one is, my great affection for you; the other is, the power of the cross of Christ in the midst of suffering."

The day following, which was the 28th of January, must have been a solemn one to my uncle. Thinking that his hour was at hand, he

made a last effort, that he might leave every thing belonging to him in perfect order. All the morning, Fanchette saw him, or heard him, slowly coming and going from one place to another, leaning for support against the wall as he went, and frequently obliged to stop to rest himself. We supposed that he must have been looking over his inventories, and putting every thing in its right place. Some of his linen he laid on one side for the poor. At one o'clock he descended for the last time into his dining-room, dined there, gave a last look at every object around, then turning with affectionate kindness to Fanchette, he said, "Let us bless God every day, and look forward to the best day." When the usual hour arrived in which we were accustomed to pay him our daily visit, he said to us, "How great is God's mercy towards me, and with what ineffable consolations He rejoices my heart!" When we left him, he stood at his window, and watched us while we crossed the court, as he generally did. He then sat down, quite worn out, and ready to depart, no doubt blessing God, on our account as well as on his own, for having so ordered it that death had not overtaken him during one of his journeys, when far from us, and alone.

The next day was one of exhaustion. He could not come, as usual, to his window, but was obliged to be satisfied with making us understand that his heart accompanied us. On the 30th he could not even sit down; his breathing was impeded, his face quite drawn, and his eyes were neither able to bear the light, nor the slightest movement before them. His looks, however, dwelt by turns on each of us, with an expression of unutterable affection. We saw by his countenance that he was praying for us, and that he blessed us. I said to him, "Deprived as we are of the interchange of words, there is one name which in itself expresses every thing we could desire to say to each other." "Oh, yes," he exclaimed, with sudden and unexpected energy, "when all else fades away, when we can no longer connect one idea with another, or scarcely dwell on a single subject, the name of Jesus still remains to us. Every thing may fail and vanish away; one object endures in imperishable brightness; it is ever more and more to be desired; it is altogether lovely. This, my beloved children, is the cross of Jesus Christ! Ah, you can never sufficiently declare the inestimable value of this to every one to whom you may have access. And more especially may my dear grand-

children find this sure refuge in the morning of their life !” We pressed his hand at parting with him ; it was cold as ice ; his lips were burning, and trembling with emotion. He had exerted himself too much. The night which followed, was, he owned to us, the worst he had ever passed. “ I have not, however, been left alone or comfortless,” he hastily added ; “ I experienced on my sick-bed what M. de la Fléchère did so vividly on his death-bed, the need of repeating to myself every hour that which makes the heart thrill with unspeakable joy whenever it is really felt, the blessed assurance that God is love ! This is all you will hear from my lips to-day, my beloved children ; but I will not cease to beseech the Lord that He will make known to each of you, by the life-giving unction of the Holy Spirit, the meaning of this Scripture in all its grandeur and fullness of delight.”

We now considered that my uncle had reached his lowest possible degree of weakness. He could not move himself without bringing on fever. Still, however, he rose every morning, thinking it right to do so as long as God gave him the power. As he was obliged to rest frequently, it took him some hours to dress himself. When this was accomplished, he would

then, stopping as he passed from one chair to another, at length reach his couch, where he remained during the rest of the day. From thence his looks were turned towards those objects most dear to him. First of all, to an embroidered screen, the work of his wife; and he lifted the cloth which covered it with an emotion that had never lessened. After he had looked at it, he would turn to those promises in his Bible which assure the children of God that they shall meet in heaven. Over the chimney-piece was a likeness of his daughter. We have been told that a servant, soon after the death of Louise, had let this picture fall, and that it had, in consequence, been so injured and effaced, that no trace of what it had been remained. M. Gonthier never complained of this accident. It was the girl herself who mentioned it. He thought it could never be repaired, and mournfully preserved the shattered fragments. His sorrow was only known by the joy which he showed when the drawing was restored to its former state. The sides of his room were hung with the portraits of Fénelon, of Duguet, of some of the reformers, and of other men whose memories were dear and delightful to him. Above them all was that of Christ on the cross.

For many successive days we could only have a glimpse of our dear uncle. On Monday, the 3rd of February, Fanchette came to us, in a state of much agitation, to bring us a message from him. "M. Gonthier," said she, "has just formed a resolution, which he bids me communicate to you. Notwithstanding all his endeavours for several days to regain some portion of his strength, he finds that he continues to get weaker and weaker: it appears to him that his time is now very short; and he wishes to employ the little that remains in doing what he can; at all events he wishes to make the trial. He proposes therefore to receive to-morrow, by his bedside, all those of his parishioners who may desire once more to hear the voice of their pastor; and if God should give him strength, he will speak to his flock, and will pray with them, and for them. I am going to make his intention known about the parish."

We were deeply affected at hearing this. It was requiring us, the members of his own family, to lay aside all our private feelings as sons and daughters, and to consider our beloved father only in the light of the minister of Christ, and the apostle of His everlasting consolations. We knelt down in prayer to seek from above strength for our breaking hearts, and committing

the whole to God, we waited, not without anxiety, for the morrow.

Towards four o'clock, M. Gonthier's room and the adjoining apartment began to fill, and soon every place, even to the passages, was crowded with persons, who, not being able to enter, tried at least to catch a few words from the lips of their dying minister. Then, raising himself in his bed, and making an effort which was astonishing even to himself, he addressed his flock. His words came forth, one by one, from a voice at first very weak, but which acquired strength as he proceeded. Those who heard him have not forgotten the sweetness and gentleness of his tone, nor the earnest sincerity of his manner.

He began: "O my God, assist Thy poor weak servant, and put words in his mouth which, by the power of Thy Holy Spirit, may conduce in some degree to Thy glory, and to the benefit of those who hear them!"

After this short prayer, he turned towards his auditors: "My beloved brothers and sisters! This church has never known, and never can know, my deep affection for it. My heaviest cross, during the last few years, has been my want of power to give some proofs of this, and my inability to perform the public service among

you. But it was the Lord who deprived me of the means and of the strength to do so. I had only to bow down myself, and adore Him..... I may at least tell you that I have never passed one day without offering up prayers for this beloved church at the throne of grace; unworthy prayers, I confess, they have been, and so very languid, that I have need to be deeply humbled on account of them: the Lord, however, knows that they have at least been sincere.

“ But I have to speak to you about things of much higher importance. I am addressing you, in all human probability, for the last time. It is true that God alone can number our days; He can restore me yet, but I do not think He will. Let me therefore at this awful moment, when my earthly career is in all likelihood well nigh ended, and when I must soon appear before the tribunal of my Judge,—at this moment, when disguise becomes impossible, when I see eternity full before me,—let me declare to you most solemnly from my very heart, and before God who hears me, that nothing, absolutely nothing in myself, can give me the least confidence, or the least security for the future. What the world might be tempted to call my righteousness (pardon me, O my God, that such

a word should have passed my lips,) is in my own eyes but as ‘filthy rags;’ and in Thy sight, O Lord most holy, how infinitely more vile and offensive! If I have injured no one on earth, (which, however, I do not think any man can say, in speaking of himself, had he injured his neighbour in no other way than by his careless words,) not a day—what do I say? not an hour, not a minute has passed, when I have not sinned against Him from whom I have received every thing. Powers of mind, affections of the heart, strength of body, all proceeded from His infinite bounty; I ought therefore to have employed all these gifts in His service, and never to have thought, spoken, or acted, but with the earnest desire of pleasing Him, and submitting myself entirely to His holy guidance. And when I consider what I have been in the midst of such astonishing mercies, I see an immense heap of transgressions rise up, and arrange themselves as in battle array against me; so that if I looked to myself alone, I must plunge at once into an abyss of despair.

“But blessed be God, yea a thousand times blessed! I know in whom I have believed; I know Him who left heaven, with all its happiness and all its glory, to come down to earth to seek and to save those who were lost. I know that

we have redemption through His blood, even the remission of our sins, according to the riches of His grace. I know that there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus; that He ever liveth to make intercession for us, and to save those who come unto God by Him. So that, blessed be God, all fear is banished from my heart: death has lost its sting; the grave has lost all its terrors! I can even say, that, notwithstanding my strong affection for those beloved beings who are yet preserved to me through the goodness of God, the day of my departure will be a high festival to me, a day of unspeakable and glorious happiness.....for I see heaven open, and my Saviour waiting to receive me. He says to me, as to His disciples, ‘The will of my Father is, that where I am, there shall you be also.’

“Allow me to tell you, my beloved friends, that during the last few days I have been suffering at times most acutely; but my merciful and faithful Saviour has never failed to support me. He has not for an instant forsaken me, but has shed His peace and His comfort in my heart. And when the night has come on, with its long hours of darkness and suffering, I am bound to declare, to the glory of God, that my Saviour was ever near me; so that I felt calm

and peaceful under His keeping. During the time of my earthly pilgrimage, as some of you know, I have met with many painful trials; such trials as overwhelm the soul, and leave their deep traces behind them, have crossed my life; but Christ was with me also at those trying times; His grace upheld me, and I found strength and comfort in Him.

“When, therefore, we have made trial of such a friend, and found Him an unfailing Friend, a Friend who is all-sufficient, do you not think that we must earnestly desire that those whom we love should in like manner attach themselves to Him, and find in Him the same comfort, the same blessings, and the same peace?

“May I be permitted, a poor weak creature as I am, to ask you a few questions upon these subjects?

“I know that there are in this church, I love to believe it, a considerable number of persons who have come to their Saviour, and who love Him in earnest; for this I have often and often blessed God. But this treasure of faith and love which has been bestowed upon them, have they carefully watched over it to preserve it from every defilement? Do they seek to preserve it entire, to increase it? Do they shun

every place, and every occasion, where it might be endangered? If they examine themselves... if they recall the zeal and the fervour of their former days, even of their first love, how many sighs will escape from their sorrowing hearts! Ah, let those who do feel thus weak and unsteady, come humbly, and as for the first time, to Him who is ready to confirm the feeble knees, as soon as he is called upon in faith. Others among you are still fluctuating between the gospel and the world. You wish for all the joy and the comfort which are to be found in Christ, and you wish *only* to keep back, perhaps, a single desire, a single taste, or a single habit; but is it not this very desire, or taste, or habit, which comes between you and God? Here is the real source of your secret dissatisfaction. Christ has said, you cannot serve two masters: as He gives Himself in His fulness to you, you must, in your turn, make an entire surrender of yourselves to Him. Understand me, however; I do not ask you to do this in your own strength, but I know that you can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth you; and I earnestly entreat you to come to Him, and implore Him to teach you how to give up every thing which might keep you from Him. Draw near to God through Christ Jesus; and the blessed day when

you shall have given yourself to Him without reserve, will be indeed a day of joy unspeakable to your hearts.

“Among those whom I rejoice to see around me, there are some, perhaps, who have never yet seriously thought about the concerns of their soul. This, alas ! is too probable. They allow day after day to glide away from them, while they are engaged in the trifling pursuits, the petty interests, the childish amusements, which agitate or divert a world at enmity with God. I call upon such to consider themselves, and then to look stedfastly at me.....The new kind of pulpit from which I address them, speaks in much more eloquent language than any feeble words of mine ; for death gives its unearthly force to the appeal. Let them remember that they themselves most certainly must die ; they must be brought to the very brink of eternity,—boundless, unchangeable eternity, and it may be sooner than they suppose. What will become of them at that hour of extremity, if they have not found a Saviour in Christ Jesus ? I turn to you, my friends, you who feel yourselves to be in this state : I beseech you, in the name of God, in the name of your dearest interests, to begin at last to think of the concerns of your souls ! I beseech you to fall down

at the foot of the cross of your Divine Saviour, and ask Him to open your eyes. I beseech you to take the Holy Scriptures in your hands, to search them as in the presence of God, and to pray at the same time for the light of His Holy Spirit, that you may be enabled to say, ‘Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth!’ Behold, Jesus stands at the door of your heart, and knocks: the words which you now hear from the lips of one of His weakest servants, they are another of His gracious calls to you..... O come then, come to our Lord Jesus, who will supply all your need, who will Himself make rich amends for every thing else, who comforts us in all our troubles,—come to this perfect Friend. If you have felt touched in any way while you have been here, do not, when you leave me, do not suffer this impression to pass away. As soon as you return home, fall down, I beseech you, upon your knees, and ask God to strengthen this good impression; do this again to-night; do it again to-morrow; do it every day.....and if you persevere, little by little, day by day, you will feel new thoughts arise in your hearts; and, casting off the succession of cares, perplexities, and fears, which are the portion of all those who do not choose Christ for their refuge, you will begin to live in

an atmosphere of peace and happiness, to which you have been hitherto strangers.....If, however, there should be one present still cold, and careless, and unconcerned, one who has closed his ears against the gracious and the loving call of his God, O Lord ! send an arrow of Thine to his soul ; may it pierce him, and cleave to him, and leave him no rest till he is brought captive to the foot of Thy cross !

“ I have yet one more request to make. We are not now, I know, about to approach the table of the Lord ; but accept from me the little book * which will be given to you as you leave this house. Pray read it, thinking seriously, while you do so, of your present state ; nay, search your hearts strictly and with sincerity ; and perhaps, God helping, it may be the means of giving you a clearer insight into the state of your heart than you ever had before.

“ In conclusion, I offer to God my most fervent supplications for all belonging to this church, which is so very dear to me. I beseech Him to grant unto it His Spirit of life. Blessed be His holy name that He has given you in its first minister a pastor after His own heart, one who unites zeal with faithfulness, and whose ardent desire is to win souls to Christ. I pray

* Exercices de Piété pour la Communion.

most earnestly that God will bless his ministry among you. I beseech Him also, when He shall have removed me from this world, to put a minister in my place animated by the same faith and the same anxiety for souls as my colleague. May God also bless the gospel labours of my beloved brethren de Charrière and Testuz; and should it please Him to restore my two beloved sons to that health and strength which they would gladly spend in His service, may He bless their labours most abundantly!

“I could desire to offer up many, many more prayers at the throne of grace, but my extreme weakness and exhaustion will not allow me. I shall reserve them within my heart, to offer them up to the Lord in secret and alone.And now grant, O my God! to those who are assembled here, that we may all, without one exception, meet together in heaven! Then we shall know how much Thou hast loved us; then shall we love, with a more perfect love, that compassionate, that faithful Friend, whose love for us has known no limits, who has purchased for us such glorious happiness, and at a price beyond calculation. It is in the name and through the merits of this blessed Saviour that I beseech Thee, O my God! to hear and answer my prayer; for the love of Thy Son, our

prevailing Saviour, Jesus Christ, Amen..... Amen."

Such was the pastor's last farewell. Till he had finished speaking, God gave him strength, astonishing strength. It seemed as if his youth, for a short season, was renewed to him, that he might fulfil this the last office of his ministry. His thoughts arose fresh and vigorous, and flowed in succession, with ease and freedom; they were not only connected, but full of energy. This duty accomplished, it appeared as if M. Gonthier's task was ended, that heaven would now open to receive him, and that an exertion like the one he had just made must complete the breaking up of a frame already fearfully shattered by its severe and repeated shocks. Witnesses, as we were, to all that he suffered, and to his ardent longing to reach the end of his course, we ought perhaps to have wished with him for the termination of all his earthly troubles. We own, however, that we could not forbear beseeching God that he might be spared to us a little longer. It seemed as if our prayers were answered, for he lived yet four months. The thought of having given to his beloved flock a last proof of his affection for them, seemed to soothe him in the midst of his continued agonies; a feeling of unspeakable

joy took possession of his heart, as in secret he thought of the unexpected favour which he had received from God, and these feelings had the effect of reviving him for a while. He would willingly have lifted up his voice to glorify God with loud praises for all His mercies, but he had only strength enough to say to us, "I have indeed experienced that out of nothingness God can draw forth words to His praise." More weeks of suffering passed away. Seeing how much the effort to speak cost him, we remained but a short time with him in our daily visits, and contented ourselves with a word or with a look from him. He had no sooner, however, regained a little strength by perfect repose, than he wished to turn it to account. He received the visit of a relation who had been an old friend of his; and a few days afterwards that of a young man to whom he was very much attached. He also desired that our children should be brought to him, and, after talking to them of the love of God, he entreated them to ask God every day to teach them to love Him: he then put his hands upon them, and blessed them one by one. Several days after this, he desired us to sit down near his bed, rang for Fanchette, and said he wished her to hear what he had to tell us, and then spoke to us as

follows: "My dear children, my own dear children, I feel an anxious desire to explain myself to you on one point, that you may quite understand me; you will then join with me in blessing God for the goodness He has continued to manifest towards me. You know what strength was lent me a month ago, when I was permitted to receive by my bed-side so many of my beloved flock, and you have seen, and still see, the extreme irritability of nerves under which I have laboured since that period. It is on this subject that I wish to speak to you. You may remember that, two years ago, at the time my beloved sister was taken from us, I made an exertion to visit her, far beyond my strength, and after her death I fell into a state which I can never think of without shuddering.....or rather, without recalling to mind the mercy of my God, who neither then nor at any time forsook me. I was three days without being able to lie or to sit down, but was obliged, in order to avoid suffocation, to walk rapidly up and down my chamber. The pulsations of my heart, more violent than I can describe, seemed to spread from thence to every part of my head, and the throbbing of my temples was as strong as that of my heart. Every instant I expected that the next would deprive me of my senses: the

abyss was there—I saw it—I was near its fearful edge, so near...so very near, and my God did not permit me to fall into it. He only showed me my danger, that He might at the same time make known to me His great deliverance. Oh ! let me bless His holy name for this fresh proof of His mercy towards me ! About three weeks afterwards, I was enabled to go to Lyons, and there I saw my physician. Having felt my pulse, he was frightened at its rapidity, though so much reduced then from what it had been. Among other directions which he gave me, he insisted more particularly on the observance of one. Speaking with that authority to which his experience and his friendship for me entitled him, he conjured me never again to think of speaking in public ; and pointing out the peril from which I had just been preserved, he assured me that it must again overtake me, if I did not carefully avoid whatever might in any degree give rise to it. You will judge, after hearing this, how urgent must the wish of my heart have been to address my flock once again, and how powerful the inward feeling which impelled me. But other circumstances conspired to induce me to listen to this secret whisper. First of all, I must tell you, that as soon as I had familiarized myself to this

idea, a great many thoughts were presented to my mind, at once clear and well arranged. You know, for you have sometimes witnessed it, how difficult it often is for me to connect two ideas together; but now they succeeded each other without any effort on my part, nay even with a rare facility. This is not all. I never possessed a good memory as to mere words, and of late years my powers of memory have been altogether weakened; but words now came readily without my seeking, and when once come, they remained fixed in my mind, as they might have done to a person possessed of a good memory. All was thus prepared without anxiety, or trouble, or effort. Add to this, that my pulsations had left me for two days—I do not say my palpitations, which are quite distinct. These last accompany fever, and are irregular; while the pulsations, on the contrary, are perfectly regular, shaking, with violent and measured strokes, both the head and heart. These had ceased. In short, my weakness was now so great, that it seemed to me almost impossible I could again experience the return of so violent a malady. I foresaw, indeed, that I might suddenly stop short in my address. I did not think it improbable that expressions might fail me, and that I should

do nothing but stammer, and seek in vain for words. Shall I hide it from you, my beloved friends? Why should I? I will therefore tell you. I was ready to bear any mortification that might be in store for me. I would not willingly assert any thing which I do not feel assured that God, who sees me, had not really imparted to me. But it is true, that if it had pleased my heavenly Father to humble me, (every heart of man has need of this, and my own much more than any other,) I should have submitted, I hope not without rejoicing. I do not say that afterwards I continued to feel in this manner, but, at the time I am speaking of, I certainly did. When I felt assured of this, I hesitated no longer. I rang my bell, and made known my resolution to my good Fanchette, and begged she would inform you. You know how God sustained me, and that He did enable me to speak, not certainly without weakness, but, to my own astonishment, without difficulty, and in a sufficiently connected manner.

“I must now say a few words about the days which succeeded. I soon experienced that He who gives all things, gives when and in what manner it pleases Him. I had a great desire to see two persons very dear to me, and I cannot

tell you how happy I felt in receiving them. But when they were gone, I found that I must for a time deny myself any such enjoyment. After my interview with the first, my pulsations returned, accompanied by the most tumultuous agitation; and when the second visit was over, I was in a state like that..... from which, as you are well aware, the tender compassion of God alone delivered me. I am once more delivered. Join with me, therefore, my beloved children, in blessing Him, with your whole heart, who in His great mercy has never yet forsaken me.” “It is not,” he added in a feeble voice, “that I do not feel more tranquil now. Nay, I might perhaps be enabled to receive any one who might wish to see me..... but you will now understand the necessity I felt of explaining all this to you.”

We said but little in reply. The expression of what we felt I reserved for writing. We merely entreated him not to follow the inclination of his kind heart by receiving visitors, and to be careful not to deprive himself of rest, God having plainly shown us how very necessary it was to him. We declared our own willingness to set the first example of submission to those privations which his state now absolutely required, feeling assured that we should derive

a gratification from our self-denial, if it should become the means of alleviating, in any way, his sufferings. He made us understand that he agreed to what we said, and would henceforth live in that solitude to which the Lord called him.

In weakness and loneliness, he was now shut up within a more narrowed circle. His habitual energy, however, did not forsake him. His universal love still felt the need of being strengthened, his faith of being purified, his brotherly kindness of being more perfectly developed. He no longer hoped to behold his friends on earth. His voice would be heard by them no more. But the presence of quiet thoughts still remained to him. He could still call them to remembrance; he could still pray for them. The names of every one he loved were by turns upon his lips; those friends passed in succession before his spirit, which now seemed but to exist in the exercise of prayer and faith. Every day, in what he called his "little journey of prayer," he visited, as far as he was able, every one of them; he could not bear to forget a single being dear to him. He always concluded by dwelling on two or three names, which remained more particularly in his thoughts during the rest of the day. In this manner did

he bequeath his legacy of affection to all his friends. He did so to each of the churches he had served. When he heard that at Nîmes the church had offered up public prayers for their former pastor, the tears flowed from his eyes. "I have been united to that church," he said, "by the closest bands of affection. I cannot express to you my deep regret when called to leave it, nor have I from that time ever ceased to bear it on my heart in my prayers to God." He often wept in reading the letters he received from Nîmes. "How gracious is God," he would say, "to have given to one so unworthy as myself a place in the affections of so many of His children ! How very good and merciful He is ! How can I help blessing Him, even with tears of joy and gratitude !" He would then, in a voice which became for the time powerful and solemn, bless those of his friends who had visited him in his solitude. Thus was his life still in some manner spent in active and useful occupation. Doubtless it was so in the sight of Him who ceased not to feed that spirit of deep affection within him, which transmuted every thing that came to it into holy love.

But if M. Gonthier had not ceased to exist even for his friends, the prolongation of his life was an inestimable blessing to us his children.

What a glorious sight were we permitted to behold ! We saw death, with its accompaniments of suffering and anguish, take its stand by the bedside of him whom we tenderly loved, allow him no intermission, and imprint upon every feature its pale and ghastly characters, and yet, when the first shock was over, we could look upon it without terror. Our first impression had given place to a feeling of deep emotion, at once sweet and solemn. The mortal life of our father was on the point of being extinguished ; his eyes had no longer the power to remain unclosed, nor could his hand return our gentle pressure ; but there was something in the midst of all this which neither fever nor intense suffering, nor the languor which followed, could disturb. The inward man remained still youthful and unimpaired within that mortal frame which earth was now reclaiming as its own, and continued to develop its hidden germ and principle of life in the midst of the dissolution of its earthly tabernacle. Through the thick darkness which shrouded the bed of death, the voice of his immortal spirit hailed the dawn of eternal day ! Who was it, O beloved friend ! that cheered thee with this glorious light ? Who gave thee such a sure and certain hope ? Who taught thee to smile in the midst of suffering ? Thou hast

often and often told us, and thou hast desired that heaven and earth should be the witnesses to thy words. There is but one way in which a sinner can be justified, and that is by the blood and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is but one power by which fallen man can become regenerate, and that is by the Spirit of our God. Jesus ! that single name,—how often hast thou uttered that one name Jesus ! when thou hast wished to speak on many glorious subjects, but the strength to do so was denied thee. That one word, Jesus ! was to thee the expression of every thing : it comprehended all in all. “ Yes,” thou hast added, “ and when one has received such surpassing consolations as He has vouchsafed to me from the first days of my illness until the present time, then indeed we are led to repeat, with inexpressible joy and gratitude, not only the separate word, Jesus ! but, my Jesus ! my Saviour ! ”

What deep wretchedness we should have felt, had not faith been given us to believe that such a never-failing Friend was watching over our beloved father, and that in such high keeping he was safe. Deprived, as we were, by his extreme weakness, of the comfort of being near him, we knew that sometimes he sank fainting under his sufferings, and remained for a long time quite

insensible upon his couch. Fanchette found him one day just coming to himself, after having thus fainted away in trying to reach his apartment. Seeing her look of alarm, "Do you not know," he said, his countenance as calm and as full of blessed confidence as usual, "that we are always well kept; let us never forget this." Alas! I forgot it but too frequently. "He is alone:" this thought was constantly before me; "he is alone, and dying." One day, on leaving him, I felt almost overcome by the anguish of mind caused by this reflection, and wandered on, scarcely knowing whither I went, till, finding myself close to the lake, my notice was attracted by a little flower which grew alone upon the naked shore. It was the first I had seen that spring. I asked myself the question, Who has caused this fair and lonely flower to spring up in this spot, among these stones and broken fragments? It seemed as if the flower answered me, and that its answer was re-echoed by every thing in nature. It was the answer which my heart needed at that moment. It said to me, as from my Saviour, "Is not thy God present here? and if He has clothed this short-lived flower with such brilliant colours, is He watching with less tender care over the soul that he has created to know Him, to love Him,

and to trust in Him?" I recognised the consoling voice of my Saviour; and as I stood there, my tears flowed; I felt humbled at my want of faith; I prayed for pardon, and was comforted. I recollected that I had often heard from my dear uncle's lips the lesson which I had just learned from the lonely flower. I remembered the numberless proofs he had received of his heavenly Father's love; I called to mind his own assured and stedfast hope, and the happiness that soon awaited him in heaven; and these thoughts, accompanied by the Divine blessing, helped to restore peace and tranquillity to my heart.

In the mean while my uncle on his part, though moving in a far purer and more elevated sphere, was acquiring fresh experience from the study of his own heart. He had also his inward struggles; and the prolongation of his life, dear to his friends, and most precious to his family, was still more useful to himself in his advancement towards perfect holiness. We were witnesses to one of his inward conflicts. It was on the only day during that interval of four months, when he felt a passing glow of life. During our short visit, I thought I saw an expression which reminded me of his former energy, and a thrill shot through my heart, as if my father was restored to me. We looked at each other, and

he easily guessed what was passing in my mind. As soon as we were gone, Fanchette heard him get up and make the trial to walk a few steps across his room, supporting himself with both his hands as he did so. He then rang his bell, and with a saddened countenance gave her his coat to brush and put ready for him. "Who would have thought it," he said, on her return, "that I should ever again wear this coat, which you have made to look so neat! God's blessed will be done! Ah! if He should think it right to restore me to health, how solemnly should I be called upon to consider my ways, nay, to weigh every action, and to live anew to His glory." "You would look," said Fanchette, "upon your recovery as a trial." "Ah! judge if it would not be so," he answered, "after having seen the gate of heaven so very near! But that which is my heavenly Father's will must always seem good and pleasant to me; and such, in fact, it always is." During the remainder of the day, the struggle having doubtless ceased within him, his countenance declared still more strikingly the resignation, the confiding love, and the peace, which were its habitual expression.

This appearance of returning health, however, lasted but one day. The very exertion he had made to try his strength brought back his fever,

and he passed a worse night than ever. A return also of the north wind increased the irritability of his nerves and his inflammatory symptoms to a high degree, and though the windows were kept carefully and closely shut, his mouth and lips were so much swollen, that he could not speak without suffering violent pain. “We shall understand one another without the help of words,” I said to him. “Yes,” he replied, “in blessing God under this dispensation, as well as every other.”—“God be blessed for ever” were the only words he could say to us on the morrow. We could only exchange looks during the days which followed. He gave us his blessing, placing one hand on his heart, and lifting up the other, though not without difficulty, towards heaven. Whatever else he had to say to us he endeavoured to put upon paper, and wrote in a little book, under the form of prayer, the following thoughts.

“18th March.—O Lord our God, grant that we may constantly fix our thoughts on the glorious promises which Thou hast given us in Thy Word, so that, deeply impressed with the sense of such wonderful mercy, and keeping in mind what ought to be the conduct of citizens of heaven, we may desire nothing so much as to purify our hearts, by the help of Thy Holy

Spirit, from all pollutions of the flesh and of the spirit, and to perfect holiness in Thy fear and love !”

19th March.—“ O Lord God, grant that we may labour for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, with at least as much zeal as the children of this generation do for the meat which perisheth. Ah ! ought not our zeal to be infinitely greater than theirs ? Grant us, Lord, the grace to understand this, and to feel it, that from henceforth we may not advance so slowly along our onward course, but move swiftly towards our heavenly calling.”

20th March. — “ O Lord, in Thy great mercy Thou hast permitted us to taste how good and gracious Thou art. But Thou hast taught us, that after having attained this sweet, this blessed experience, we should nourish ourselves with pure and spiritual milk, in order that we may grow thereby. O may prayer and the milk of Thy Word be our greatest enjoyment ; that, feeding ever upon it, we may grow in grace, in love, and in the knowledge of Thee ; so that in all things our will may be conformed to Thy will : and do Thou, O Lord, bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ !”

When the tendency to inflammation had somewhat abated, my uncle began to address some

few words to us in conversation. On the 21st of March he said to us, "How gracious is the Lord to me! He has now given me to see more clearly, and at times to feel more powerfully than before, the long succession of His mercies towards me. At the sight of such innumerable benefits, the soul melts into gratitude. O my beloved friends, bless Him with me, and for me."

On the 22d of March—"No one can tell what he loses, who does not familiarize himself to the blessed habit of praise and thanksgiving. I do not think that on earth there is a more delightful employment than that of blessing Him, to whom all blessing belongs. Oh that I could make known to every one what I have felt at those times, when the Lord, in His tender compassion, has granted me ease after suffering; or when, in still greater mercy, He has revealed to me more clearly the greatness of my deliverance through Christ Jesus; or when, after opening to me a brighter glimpse of the joys of heaven, He has at the same time given me grace to praise Him, with some degree of warmth, for all these His wonderful mercies. Yes, and I have often felt the desire to bless Him yet again for granting me the power of blessing Him: such happiness had I tasted in doing so!"

23d of March, the first day in Passion Week.—“What a week have we just entered upon! what recollections does it not awaken! what amazing love! what rich blessings! where is the *human* heart of man, who can, while here below, comprehend the immensity and extent of these blessings? Ah! at least let us pray without ceasing, that the Lord will vouchsafe to reveal to us as much of His glorious goodness as our present weakness can apprehend, and that He will put into our hearts such love towards Him, that we may make a less unworthy return to Him who has loved us with such surpassing love! Yes, my beloved children, let us always pray for this love, ever for love, ever for more love, and with love every other grace will be ours. How joyfully shall we then go forward in the ways of the Lord! How dear, how sacred must His will, must *all* His will, then become to us.”

28th of March, Good Friday.—“What a day is this, my beloved children! No words of man can express what we should feel upon this day! Our desire, at least, will be to kneel in thought at the foot of the cross, and there to worship, to admire, and to praise with all the powers of our souls, and with all the ardour it may be given us to feel!”

5th April.—“What will be the issue of my

illness, God alone knows. If I dared to form any secret wish about it, you know what that wish would be.....But I abstain from this. Thy will alone, O my God! no will of mine, be done! There is nothing but darkness in me. Thou only art light! unerring wisdom! infinite goodness! therefore, Lord, do with me whatever may seem good unto Thyself!"

On the 11th he showed us a letter he had received from one of his most valued friends, saying, "Here is a delightful letter, except for the praises it contains. Praises! when they are given to us, let us at once translate them thus:—Hasten, poor wretched sinner, hasten to embrace, with fresh ardour, that cross, without which thou wert lost, immediately lost. Before it, the false scaffolding on which men desire to raise thee will soon crumble into nothing, and thou wilt find thyself sunk to thy proper level, surrounded by thy wretched unworthiness, and by thy innumerable sins, which Jesus alone could cover and blot out."

On the 15th of April he had still strength enough to address us in these words: "Among the benefits to be derived from sickness, more especially when our sufferings are sharp and prolonged, there is one about which I wish to speak to you. It is, that we are led to fix our eyes

more constantly upon sufferings of a totally different nature, and infinitely more dreadful; and meeting the compassionate looks of our Saviour, we learn to bless and love Him more and more."

Again for several days we could only press our beloved father's hand, without hearing a word from his lips.

On the 8th of May, he could merely articulate: "Without Christ what would have become of me? I cannot even think of it without shuddering!"

The 9th—"Till now I have been enabled to forbear asking God to diminish my sufferings, but rather to give me a full acquiescence in His will.....all else will soon come to an end"—He could say no more.

On the 10th—"One day in the Lord's courts is better than a thousand elsewhere—and an eternity in those courts!"—and then the words, "Oh, to love!" gently escaped his lips, not once, but again, and yet a third time.

The 11th—"Not a day passes in which we have not fresh sins to bring forth in contrite confession before the Lord—not a day in which we are not sustained by a fresh supply of His all-sufficient grace. Ought not, then, our love to keep pace with these benefits?"

On the 12th he put off his clothes for the last time. It was the anniversary of his wife's death. He said to us, referring to this subject: "The children of God are enabled to speak with calmness about these temporary separations. Twenty-six years ago my beloved Louise put off every kind of earthly raiment on this very day when I have just put off this part of mine. This trifling coincidence is delightful to me. But how much more delightful is the glorious prospect of one day meeting with those we so tenderly love around the throne of the Lamb! Oh! what grace there is in that rich treasury of graces which flows down to us from the love of Christ! What a subject for praise and thanksgiving, to all eternity, is here presented to our souls. My dear Louis,"* he said to me, gently pressing my hand, "to be united for ever! We shall be united for ever!"

The 13th—"My dear children, look upon those days as your happiest days when you have spoken with most love of Christ."

The 14th—"Perhaps some persons, in speaking of me, might say, 'His conflict is much protracted; for his own sake we ought to desire that it may soon cease.' But I can declare that this is not the case with myself; indeed it is not. My poor miserable heart still needs to be

* He means his nephew, Louis Vulliemin.

cleansed from many earthly feelings. Many new desires must still be born there. O let me thank God, who is never weary of showing His goodness towards me, and who, by His wonderful power, has, during these last few days, caused some of these new desires to spring up within me.—If you could but know what a new and real light the approach of eternal glory throws into the darkest and most hidden corners of our hearts!—If, in order to prepare me for a heavenly inheritance, bought with the price of His most precious blood, my Saviour should see fit to prolong my sufferings; if even He should think it necessary to call me to a still severer conflict, I should bless Him from the bottom of my heart, persuaded that it would be gain—yes, that it would be all gain to me!”

The 15th—“There are two things for which the minister of Christ can never sufficiently pray every day of his life; one is, an ever-growing persuasion of all that Christ is to us, so that he may be able to speak of it to others with more and more earnestness; the other is, an ever-increasing longing for the salvation of the souls committed to his charge. I beg you will carry these words to M. de Charrière,* as the legacy

* His assistant in the ministry since my brother's health had prevented his continuing as such.

which my heart leaves to his heart." On this day his eyes lost the power of reading.

The 16th—"It is sickness which renders us a little less ungrateful. In discovering to us our unworthiness, (I speak of those who live by faith,) it teaches us to feel more than ever that every thing from the Lord is of grace."

The 17th—"Every day teaches me to bless Him, and it is sweet indeed to bless!"

The 18th—When he knew that from every quarter persons sent to us to inquire about him, and that we had likewise a great number of letters to answer, he went so far as to apologize for the trouble he thus occasioned. This grieved us, and I entreated him not to speak so again. "Well," he answered, "I retract what I have said. You cannot be near to attend me on my sick-bed as your heart would desire; my state will not allow of this: the letters you write, therefore, shall stand in place of your attendance upon me. Look upon them as such, and forget what I said."

The 19th—During this day his prayers were particularly offered up for the *Classe*, or Synod, which was to assemble the next day; for each of his colleagues, and for the rapid spread of the gospel in their parishes.

The 20th, he said to us—"We do not reflect

enough upon the holiness of God. If we could bring before ourselves His absolute hatred of all kind of sin, of all defilement, however imperceptible to human eyes, of every secret feeling of impatience or self-love, of every light word spoken, or hasty judgment formed against our brother,—with what earnestness we should beseech the Lord to put away from us even the appearance of evil, and how powerfully such an habitual consciousness would act towards the advancement of our own sanctification !”

The 21st—“To love perfectly is heaven: to love even imperfectly is a foretaste of heaven.”*

The 22nd—“If I could speak, it would be to tell you of the wonderful goodness of God.”

The 23rd—“At the commencement of every day let us say to ourselves, Here is a day which God gives me to do His will, and not my own; I shall be happy indeed if, at the end of it, I may be able to say, that, with the help of His grace, frequently prayed for, I have not wandered very far from His blessed and most holy ways.”.....

The 24th, his weakness and emaciation had

* “*Aimer, c’est le ciel; aimer un peu moins imparfaitement, c’est un avantgoût du ciel.*” These few words are engraved upon the stone which covers the mortal remains of M. Gonthier.

reached the last stage. What he wished to say, he had not sufficient strength to finish. "It is no longer permitted me to speak even those few words to you, which were so delightful to me.God wishes to establish me in my own nothingness.....Let us glorify Him for His wisdom!"

The 25th—He could only just pronounce these words, "God is good." In the evening I asked him to allow me, as the sweet and sacred privilege of a son, to perform some little services necessary to him, and he consented.

The 26th arrived. He thought in the morning that he could perceive symptoms in himself which were the forerunners of his departure. He asked to see a medical man. "You know," he said to him, "that the christian does not fear the day of his death; it is a festival day to him. Will you kindly tell me, therefore, if you think my hour is at hand?" The answer he received was this, "Perhaps it may be to-day—perhaps to-morrow." At these words tears of joy and thanksgiving flowed from his eyes. Every feature wore the expression of gratitude towards God. He sent for us. "My children," he said, "I bless you for all your goodness to me—I bless you and your dear children." We remained by his bedside during the whole of this

day, for he lived through it ; and our colleagues in the ministry spent part of it with us.

He had not been able to take nourishment for some time. A small sponge placed near him served to moisten his lips at intervals, and to convey a few drops of wine and water into his mouth. Every now and then he just pronounced the single name of “Jesus” with a tone of assured hope—that all-powerful name, which was to him a shelter and defence—that name of peace, which was all-sufficient for him—that sure refuge, which never failed him for an instant ! In pronouncing it, he tried to raise his hand, and point upwards, his countenance beaming with heavenly joy. After twelve o’clock he was no longer able to swallow the few drops of wine and water with which his throat had been moistened. “There is now one tie less to detain me,” he said. His colleague, Mr. Dupraz, read a few verses from the Scriptures, and prayed near his bed : the dying man blessed him with much affection. “Jesus ! Jesus !” did he still repeat with an expression of adoring love and joy. He frequently also unclosed his eyes, to fix them upon us, with a look of tender affection, at the same time lifting up his hand and pointing towards heaven, to recall to our minds the place

of our meeting again. During the night he begged us to go and take some repose; he repeated his wish, and the third time insisted upon our doing so. Fanchette remained for some time alone with him. When we returned, he had still sufficient strength to press our hands. Then came the last struggle—there was no terror, no agony. The spirit was in peace, but still the body suffered; the heavy drops on his forehead told this too plainly. At length, towards six o'clock, he fixed his eyes upon us for the last time, and they closed no more—the heavy death sweat became of icy coldness—we lifted up our hearts to God in prayer.

“ Servant of God, well done !
Rest from thy lov'd employ ;
The battle fought, the victory won,
Enter thy Master's joy ! ”

We must not conclude without an answer to those persons who have asked us to make known to them the contents of our dear uncle's will. He restores to the family of his mother-in-law every thing that came to him with his wife. His poor relations are not forgotten. Some few legacies

are bequeathed to funds for the use of the poor, others to some christian societies. His two nephews are his heirs. He concludes his testament with an emotion which he finds it difficult to repress, in bearing testimony to the deep affection he felt for us, and by throwing himself in thought at the foot of the cross of Christ, embracing it as his only hope of salvation. It has caused some surprise to find how little he had to leave. He possessed 50 louis a year of his own, and received 1380 francs* as his salary, which sum he about shared with his suffragan. To see how much he sowed he might have been thought rich; but he had two sources from which he drew the supplies of that liberality in which he indulged: one was the produce of his works, which he looked upon as a sacred deposit to be entirely employed in deeds of christian love; the other was his perfect system of order. His house was like his heart. The desire of perfection was carried into its minutest details. There was an inventory of every thing, and every thing had its proper place. He noted down all his expenses, however trifling, even till the day before his death. Every month, what was written down

* 1380 Swiss francs are equal to rather more than 86*l.* sterling.

was classed, balanced, and adjusted carefully. It was the order and economy of charity that desired to have sufficient to bring the costly box of ointment to the feet of Jesus.

POSTSCRIPT BY THE EDITOR.

In the *Life of Felix Neff*, published by the Religious Tract Society, which owes much valuable information to the Rev. Ami Bost, and to the Rev. M. Guers, of Geneva, M. Guers mentions that M. Gonthier was the chief instrument in the conversion of Felix Neff, who frequently attended his ministry.

THE END.

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